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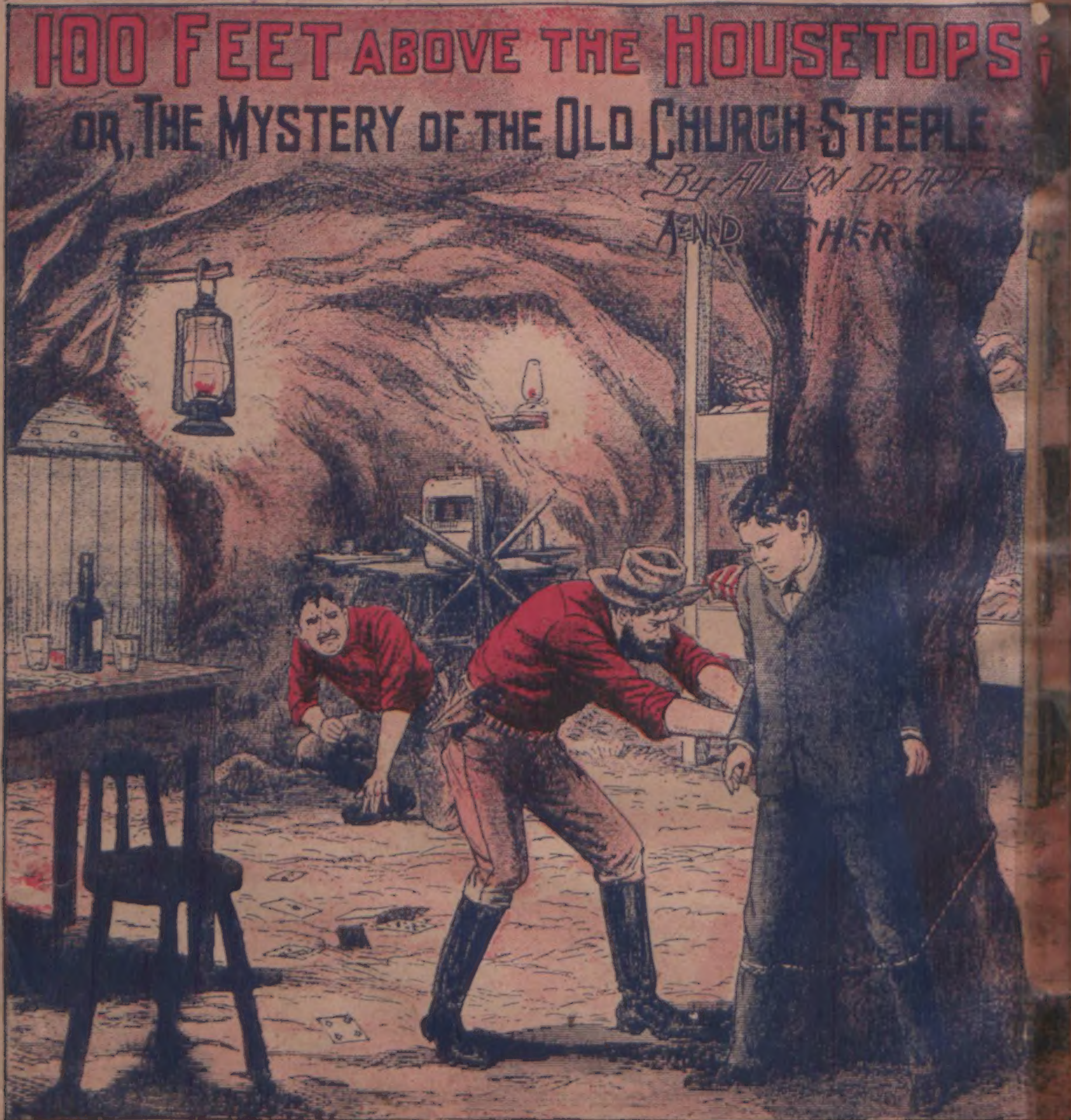
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NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 26, 1923

Price 7 Cents

## 100 FEET ABOVE THE HOUSETOPS; OR, THE MYSTERY OF THE OLD CHURCH STEEPLE

By ALLYN DRAPER  
AND OTHERS



"Now for it!" said Ben Bramble, springing to Sandy's side and severing his bonds with a few swift strokes of his knife. Almost instantly the young clerk was free, and he stood with Ben Bramble, to leave the cave.



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## PLUCK AND LUCK

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# 100 Feet Above the Housetops

## OR, THE MYSTERY OF THE OLD CHURCH STEEPLE

By ALLAN DRAPER

### CHAPTER I.—In the Old Church Steeple.

"Scudmore Spreckels! What are you about?" Sheriff Kidd spoke severely, for he was exceedingly wroth.

"Scud" Spreckels, a boy of seventeen, who pumped the organ in the Burrstown church, had been guilty of a serious dereliction of duty. In the midst of a hymn the choir, led by Sheriff Kidd, had suddenly been left by the music.

And the deprivation was justly laid to Scud. He had forgotten to pump. But Scud had a good excuse, for he was reading a rousing Indian story, which he held in one hand while he worked the organ-handle with the other. But Sheriff Kidd's voice recalled Scud to the stern realities of life, and he dropped the "Wild West Weekly" and pumped away as energetically as a city milkman flavoring the morning's milk with good "croton." And the hymn proceeded. But when it was concluded and the service continued, Sheriff Kidd whispered an admonition to Scud.

"Durn yer! yeou let story-readin' alone an' 'tend ter business, er I'll warm up ther seat o' yer doeskins so ye can't set down fer a week!"

"Bet a dollar an' seventy-five cents yeou don't!" retorted Scud.

There was no great amount of love squandered between him and "o'd Kidd" as the Burrstown boys called the sheriff. Scud was a gawky, overgrown boy, with red hair and a freckled face; but he was nobody's fool, and sharper than he looked, indeed, by a good deal. Scud's mother was the village washerwoman, and the boy's father, after a long struggle with old King Alcohol, had given up, beaten. He had been dead for some years. Scud "worked out" summers, and "did cinces for his board," and went to school winters. It was a winter's evening, and after the benediction had been pronounced and the congregation was dismissed, Scud remained "to ile up ther runnin' gear of the orgin," so he expressed it.

Deacen Wooldrow locked up the church, and of course Scud was locked in. But he didn't know it. The boy oiled the organ pump and then took out the library in which he had become so deeply interested. In a few moments he was off with the hero in the valley of the Yellowstone, and the time went by rapidly unheeded. But in-

teresting as the story was the lad finally fell asleep, and it was twelve o'clock by the village time-pieces when it became so cold up in the organ loft that Scud awoke.

"Gee whiz! How cold it is! I reckon I must hev fell asleep. The candle I was readin' by has gone out. Wonder how long I've been here, anyhow?" muttered Scud.

The old church was now in darkness, save for the moonlight falling in silvery shafts here and there through the stained windows. Scud turned up his coat collar, put on cap and mittens, and pocketed the library.

"I'll get out of this just about as quick as I kin," he resolved.

Then he looked out of the window and saw it was midnight by the village clock in the town hall. Scud saw the tombstones in the churchyard at the same time. And he gave a sudden start, while his hair began to raise on the top of his head in consequence of fright. Scud saw a form gliding among the tombs. It was robed in black, and while he looked it vanished close beside the church.

"Oh, ah, oh!" uttered Scud, in three different tones of voice.

And then he dropped down on one of the choir seats.

"Good Peter! By gravv, it's the ghost!" groaned Scud. "What shall I do? What shall I do? I s'pose this is a judgment onto me. Ever since the Burrstown bank was robbed, an' Bill Perkins saw the light in the old church steeple at midnight half a dozen folks hev seen the ghost in or about the old church as they hev been a-passin' by at night. I laughed at 'em. I wouldn't believe 'em. Now this is what I git," reflected Scud.

Then he began to tremble worse than ever, as he heard a sound in the darkened churchroom below. The sound came again and again. Scud soon made it out to be caused by stealthy footsteps in the church. Presently Scud heard the footsteps on the stairs leading to the choir loft.

"Oh, great Scott! it's comin' right up here. Wonder if it's after me," thought the frightened boy.

The footsteps continued to ascend the stairs, and in a moment or so they sounded on the floor of the choir loft. A ray of light shot across the



space, and the boy, crouching behind the organ, sprang to his feet as he the succeeding moment beheld a tall, dark form clad in a long cloak and wearing a mask. The stranger carried a dark lantern, and its brilliant light quite dazzled Scud's sight. The man in black had turned to the stairs behind the organ leading to the steeple, when he saw Scud. Then, as the lad started up, the lantern's light was flashed full upon him. The stranger seemed at first to be about as much frightened as Scud was. He started violently, uttered a half-stifled exclamation, and seemed about to beat a hasty retreat. Then a second thought seemed to influence him, and, regaining his composure, he said in a hollow voice:

"I am the spirit of the old church. Mortal, what art thou doing here at this, the hour when church-yards yawn and I come to my domain?"

"I ain't doin' nothin' here. I fell asleep, that's all, an' if you'll let me off this time, Mr. Ghost, you won't never catch me here again. Oh, why couldn't this be old Kidd, 'stead of me?"

"Mortal," replied the ghost in the same hollow tones as he thrust forth one cold hand and seized the trembling boy by the shoulder, "this time will I pardon thee. But hark ye! If by any chance so much as a single word of this meeting escapes thy lips, if ye tell anyone of it, then will I appear unto thee at dead of night and carry thee away to the realms of everlasting darkness."

"I won't tell. Hone ter die if I will. Oh, let me go home!" implored Scud.

"Very well. You may go. Hasten, hasten!"

Scud made straight for the door. Finding it locked, Scud thought of escaping by a window, and glancing above he saw a window under the choir standing open.

"I allers thought solid walls couldn't shut out ghosts. Wonder if this 'un came in through the window," thought Scud.

But he didn't pause to reflect upon this matter. On the contrary, he climbed through the window and dropped down outside in a moment. There was snow on the ground. By the moonlight, as he reached the ground, the lad saw a man's tracks in the snow under the window.

"Jee whiz! what does this mean? Ghosts don't make any tracks! There's suthin' queer about this. Dum my skin if I don't watch out an' try to find out suthin'," said Scud mentally.

Some minutes elapsed. Then Scud saw the dark form come out of the church by the open window, and hasten away in the direction of the village. The "ghost" did not come near Scud's hiding place and the boy followed him, keeping in the shadow of a snow-clad stone wall. The man in black went straight toward a grove of evergreen trees that surrounded a pretty little cottage a quarter of a mile distant. Scud kept the "ghost" in sight all that distance, and finally saw him disappear in the gloomy shadows of the pines. Then Scud advanced quickly. He was well over his fright by this time, and began to liken himself to one of his favorite heroes on the trail of a redskin. Arriving at the edge of the grove, Scud looked about in every direction, but he saw no one. The grove was deserted. Through the trees he saw the pretty white cottage with its bright green blinds, where Isaac Race, the cashier of the Burrstown bank, lived

alone with his spinster sister. Not a light was visible in the cottage. Every blind was closed.

"Jee whiz! I'm half a mind to go to the cottage and wake up Mr. Race and tell him 'bout the ghost's being prowling about here," said Scud to himself, not a little perplexed.

But then he happened to think Mr. Race might not care to be awakened at that unseemly hour.

"Race ain't a pleasant man when he's dealin' with folks that ain't so well off as he is. But he's all sugar an' honey round rich people like Squire Blake, the banker," mused Scud, as he went homeward to his mother's humble cabin, in a back lane in the rear of Squire Blake's handsome house.

## CHAPTER II.—The Mystery of A Great Robbery.

Before he went to sleep that night, or rather morning, Scud made up his mind he would not tell anyone anything about his adventure in the old church, at least for the present. Scud was doing chores for Banker Blake that winter, and he was up betimes to attend to his duties. Mention has been casually made of the Burrstown bank robbery. The facts were that institution was robbed of some twenty thousand dollars in bonds a couple of weeks before the date we are writing of. Up to the present no clue had been obtained of the robber. The facts of the case were peculiar, and there was a mystery about it. The bonds were in the bank safe at night when the institution was closed. Cashier Isaac Race and Sandy Howe, the clerk, testified to that. When the bank was closed, Race gave the key of the safe to Sandy to deliver to Squire Blake, the president of the bank. Race was going to the county town that night, and would not return until next day. Squire Blake had agreed to take the cashier's place in the bank until he came home. It was a small country bank, be it remembered, and Isaac Race and Sandy Howe were the only persons employed in it. Sandy was a young fellow of twenty-one, the son of a poor clergyman now deceased, and he had always held the respect and confidence of all who knew him.

He had delivered the key of the safe to Squire Blake that evening, but not until about nine o'clock, and the bank was closed at four! Next morning when Squire Blake opened the bank safe in Sandy's presence, it was found that the bonds were gone. But the safe was locked all right, and only Race, the cashier, and Squire Blake knew the combination. The day before the opening date of our story Dick Blake, the banker's only son, who had been at college in Boston, had returned home. Dick was a fine, handsome young fellow of twenty, and thus far he knew nothing of the attachment existing between his sister Lucy and Sandy Howe, the bank clerk.

A year before Dick had met a beautiful, talented young girl by the name of Myra Richardson, in Boston. At first sight the banker's son had fallen in love with the lovely Myra. But before he had much more than casually made her acquaintance, much less declare his love, she left Boston, and he lost trace of her.



What, then, was Dick's surprise on the day of his home-coming to meet the girl he loved, though as yet secretly, at the door of the village schoolhouse, where he had repaired to meet his sister Lucy, who was reviewing her studies with Myra Richardson that winter. On the morning after Scud Spreckel's adventure in the old church while the lad was busy in the barn, an animated conversation was taking place between Squire Blake and his son in the house. The bank robbery was the subject under discussion.

"Yes, father, you must do something in order to vindicate yourself. The mystery of the robbery must be cleared up, for there are people in the village who dare to point the finger of suspicion at you," said Dick, earnestly.

"Well, well, Dick, you are right. I must not rest until this cloud upon my reputation is dispelled, and Mr. Race also must be cleared from suspicion."

Just then the servant announced Mr. Isaac Race, and the cashier of the Burrstown Bank entered. Pleasant greetings were exchanged, and then Race said gravely:

"Have you heard the whispers that are being circulated about town reflecting on your honesty and mine, Squire Blake? I allude to the affair of the bond robbery. The gossips dare hint that you may have taken them, or that I may have secretly abstracted them before I gave the safe key to Sandy Howe—while I made the clerk think the bonds were still in the safe. Of course, this is the most absurd of suspicions. But it is none the less unpleasant."

"My son has acquainted me with the talk of the townspeople, and if Sheriff Kidd, who has undertaken to find the thief, does not very soon secure him, I shall secure other assistance to unearth the mystery," replied the banker.

"It's my own conviction that Sandy Howe is the culprit," affirmed Race, in tones of conviction, and presently he took his departure.

"Father, I would not delay a day longer in this matter. Send a dispatch for a Boston detective to come down here and investigate the mystery. I'll take it to the office if you will write the dispatch now."

"I'll do it. My good name is worth more than money. No matter what the expense the robber shall be found," said the old gentleman excitedly.

And he added shrewdly:

"We will keep it a secret that we have called a detective between you, I, Dick, and of course Mr. Race."

"Father, take my advice and let it be a secret even from Mr. Race, too, that you have sent for an officer."

"All right. I agree. Not a living soul save you and I in all Burrstown shall know we have sent for an officer," assented the banker.

Twenty minutes later Dick Blake and Scud were on their way to the telegraph office in the banker's cutter. The operator was pledged to secrecy, and the dispatch for a detective was duly wired to Boston. That evening there was an apple-cut at Deacon Swift's, and all the young people, including Myra Richardson, the pretty schoolma'am, Lucy Blake, Dick, Sandy Howe, and many others were present. The apples had all been cut, and the services of Scud Spreckles, who played the fiddle, were called into requisition for

a dance. The merriment was at its height and Scud was sawing away at "Money Musk" with all his might on his queaky old fiddle, when there came a heavy rap at the door. Someone opened it, and in walked Sheriff Kidd, followed by Isaac Race the bank cashier.

"I hev got a painful duty to perform, an' I don't like to do it, but I've got to. The facts are, Sandy, I hev got a warrant fer your arrest fer the bank robbery," said Sheriff Kidd, advancing and placing his hand on Sandy Howe's shoulder.

"Who swore out the warrant against me, sheriff?" demanded Sandy, at last.

"Isaac Race," replied the sheriff.

"Yes, I did take out the warrant, for to-day I saw you lose this card, with the combination of the safe as it was locked on the night of the robbery on it, in your handwriting!" cried Race.

"It is false! I never had that card in my possession," said Sandy, indicating a slip of paste-board which the cashier held up.

"I am sorry for yer, lad, but you must come with me," the sheriff spoke, and he led Sandy through the door.

Sheriff Kidd had come in a sleigh, and he was leading Sandy toward it, when Scud came up behind them and whispered:

"Cut an' run fer it! My hand-sled is right here. You can jump on it and ride down the hill to the depot. The train will be along in three minutes. Git aboard, and don't come back until the real thief is found."

Sandy hesitated but a moment. But all at once he broke away from Kidd, rushed to Scud's hand-sled, and, throwing himself upon it, shot away down the hill. The sheriff started after Sandy as he ran for the sledge, and Scud cut the strap that secured the officer's horse and sent him off in another direction at full speed. Sandy arrived at the foot of the hill, and reached the depot in time to board the expected train, and he was carried away on it, while Kidd ran after his horse.

### CHAPTER III.—A Desperate Struggle in the Old Church.

When Kidd ran in pursuit of his horse Scud ran with him, and pretended to be very anxious to catch the runaway. The sheriff had no suspicions of the part Scud had played in assisting Sandy to escape, but he did not see the lad cut his horse loose or hear him advise the bank clerk to cut and run. Kidd's horse was not noted for speed, and he presently floundered in a snow-drift, and there he was secured and driven back to the deacon's house. When Sheriff Kidd and Race drove to the depot—as they did as soon as possible—and tried to send a message to have Sandy arrested at the next station, they found they could not do so. The telegraph wires were down. Two days passed. Nothing was heard from Sandy, and Lucy Blake was secretly in an agony of fear and solicitude on account of her fugitive lover. On the third day a stranger appeared in town, who introduced himself as "Mr. Mills," and gave out that he was "going to start a singing school." No one in Burrstown suspected the fact, but Mr. Mills was really the detective



from Boston whom the banker had sent for. So the detective went to work in his own way after he had been placed in possession of all the facts of the case as far as they were yet known.

Meantime, Dick was sorely troubled. On the night of Sandy Howe's arrest he had observed that Myra Richardson had evinced great sorrow, and bravely championed Sandy's cause. Dick had failed to observe the much greater agitation of his sister Lucy. And in his ignorance of the real facts, and having heard that Myra and Sandy were excellent friends, he fell into the error of fearing that Myra was lost to him by reason of her being in love with the bank clerk. The thought made Dick miserable. One night not long after the occurrence of the incidents last related Dick was returning at a late hour from a sociable in the country—at a farmhouse beyond the village. In returning he had to pass the old church. It was about midnight when the banker's son arrived in front of the old church. Chancing then to glance up at the steeple one hundred feet above the housetops, he saw a light in the window of the belfry.

The young fellow was no coward, and he determined to investigate the mystery. Going to the church door he found it locked. But passing around to the back door he found it open. The snow had now pretty well melted from the ground, so Dick saw no tracks under the window, which was the very one through which Scud fled the night he met the ghost in the organ loft. Dick entered the church through the window. It was a dark night, and inside the church the young man could see nothing. He struck a match, intending to light one of the oil-lamps with which the church was provided. But a gust of wind extinguished the match as soon as it blazed. The young man advanced toward the stairs leading to the organ-loft, and thence to the steeple. Before he had taken a dozen steps, he stumbled over a foot-stool, and made a loud sound.

He quickly gained the stairs, and began to ascend them. Half-way up the flight he came in contact with someone. In the darkness Dick could only tell that the person was a man, but as to who he was he could form no idea. But he seized the unseen one the moment they met. Suddenly the unknown freed one hand and dealt Dick a heavy blow with some iron object. The young man fell senseless. The other flashed the light of a dark-lantern on Dick and saw he was unconscious. The young man's assailant was the same person whom Scud had encountered in the organ loft at midnight. The mysterious personage was clothed as on that night, and he wore the same black mask. As he produced the light a second man was revealed behind him. That personage was not masked, and he was a most brutal and repulsive-looking ruffian.

"Come. We must away at once. I don't want to kill him, and he will regain his senses in a few moments," said the mask.

The other assented and they passed down the stairs and left the church by means of the window, which was open. Swiftly the two men fled through the night, and in a few moments they were in the pine grove to which Scud had tracked his "ghost" several nights previously.

"Here we part," said the mask, as they halted. "Meet me to-morrow night between ten and

eleven. But not at the old church. No, not there. Come to the deserted cabin a short distance south of the grove. You can't miss it, though you are a stranger here. It's the only dwelling in town with a red door."

Then they parted. The mask shut off the light of his lantern and hastened toward the village. His companion crossed the road, clambered over a wall, and made off towards the railroad, through the adjacent fields. When they were gone, Scud Spreckles came out of the grove. He was on his way home from a husking bee, and had struck across lots through the pine grove to shorten the distance. All at once he heard voices. He stopped, and a moment later, by the light of the man's dark lantern, he saw the ghost of the old church and his companion. Scud crept nearer and listened. Every word spoken by the man in black and his comrade was overheard by the lad.

"Jee whiz!" said Scutt, when the men were gone, "I guess I'll be somewhere near the deserted cabin to-morrow night myself."

He didn't attempt to follow either of the men. Before he thought of doing so they were far away in the darkness.

The following night at about ten o'clock, Myra Richardson stole from the house where she boarded stealthily. The pretty young school-teacher seemed desirous of avoiding notice, and such was the truth. Lucy Blake had received a note from Sandy Howe, telling her that he had secretly returned to Burrstown and meant to clear himself by ferreting out the real robber of the bank. Sandy requested Lucy to meet him at the deserted cabin south of the pine grove that night at ten. Lucy was too ill to go to meet her lover, and she had requested Myra, who was her confidential friend, to go in her place. Myra reached the cabin a few moments after ten and almost immediately Sandy Howe joined her there. They were conversing earnestly and Sandy was repeating a long message for Myra to carry to Lucy, when Dick Blake, who had seen Myra enter the cabin as he was passing in the shadow, on the opposite side of the street, and his curiosity had led him to the window, saw and overheard all.

"It is as I feared. She loves Sandy and he has returned to meet her here. He has won her from me. Ha, ha! I can separate them forever my giving the alarm and causing Sandy's arrest. Shall I do it?" said Dick, mentally.

He had hastily turned toward Sheriff Kidd's house. Suddenly he paused.

"No, I will not do it! In my heart I believe Sandy is innocent. He shall go free for all of me. I will not be guilty of an ignoble deed even to win the girl I love!" he exclaimed, and then he hastened from the spot.

A moment or so later Myra and Sandy parted. The young clerk made his way stealthily through the pines. Myra remained for some time within the cottage reflecting upon what Sandy had told her. All at once the door opened, and by the bright moonlight she saw a burly, brutal-looking ruffian. He sprang into the room, closed the door, and placing his back against it demanded:

"What are ye doin' here, gal. Thought no one lived yere."



The fellow was the black mask's comrade of the preceding night.

"Let me pass!" cried Myra in intense alarm.

"No, no: you're too pretty a gal to leave me like that, an' besides, I'll trouble ye for that gold watch an' chain ye hev got on," cried the ruffian.

As he spoke he sprang at Myra and seized her rudely. She uttered a scream of terror, but the succeeding instant the villain clutched her throat.

"We are alone. I've got ye, an' ye can't git away," hissed the fellow.

"Not alone, ye ain't, by a long shot, ye durn skunk!" cried the voice of Scud Spreckels at that thrilling moment, and the village boy darted through an interior door.

The wretch uttered a furious oath and flung Myra, who had now fainted, heavily upon the floor as he rushed at Scud.

#### CHAPTER IV.—The Events of A Night.

When he revealed his presence in the deserted cabin and rushed to the assistance of Myra Richardson, Scud Spreckels knew that there was danger ahead. The boy sprang aside and eluded the fellow's first onset, but he came at him again instantly. Scud snatched up a heavy stick of firewood from the hearth, which he had leaped to as he dodged the ruffian, and as the latter continued his attack the lad assumed a defensive attitude, and brandished his improvised weapon of defense threateningly.

"Stand back, durn ye!" cried Scud.

But his warning was not heeded.

Just as the now demoniacally disposed ruffian was about to spring at Scud again Myra Richardson's voice rang out in a clear, loud scream for assistance. She had regained consciousness, and sprang to her feet.

"Help! help!" the girl shouted, as she ran to the door.

An answering shout came back. It was uttered by a manly voice, and rapid footsteps were heard approaching. The man who had answered Myra Richardson's shout for help entered the deserted cottage. He was Mr. Mills, "the singing master," as he chose to be known. The banker's detective had been prowling about the village that night intent on business best known to himself. Fortunately for Myra Richardson and Scud, Mr. Mills chanced to be passing the deserted cottage just as the young school-mistress screamed for help.

Hearing her voice, Mr. Mills at once rushed toward the isolated and long since untenanted cottage.

Myra briefly related the adventure of the evening, commencing with the arrival of the ruffian who had assaulted her and Scud. But the school-mistress passed over all that had taken place there previously. She did not offer any explanation as to her presence at the deserted cottage.

If Mr. Mills noted this he did not say so. Scud observed the omission, and he put in glibly:

"Anyone would a run in here like Miss Myra did to git away from the man that was follerin' her. S'pose she didn't think no one lived here. I saw the feller come in after her, an' I had bizness after him."

Myra gave Scud a grateful glance.

Leaving the cottage, Myra walked swiftly to her boarding place. Mr. Mills insisted upon seeing her safely to the door, but he did not find her in a mood for conversation during the walk, nor did he acquire any further information regarding the events of the night. Scud went immediately homeward, too. Mr. Mills left Myra at the gate of her temporary home, and she watched him till he was out of sight, standing concealed in the shadow of the great trees. The young girl was about to enter the house, when a dark form flitted across the highway, and Sandy Howe, for the second time that night, stood before her.

"Why have you returned again? Sandy, you are running into needless peril," said Myra, when she had turned and met the hunted youth at the gate.

"I want to warn you against the man who just left you. I saw that man once in a police court in Boston. He is a professional man-hunter. Have you confided the secret of my return to him?" replied Sandy, in great anxiety.

"No, no!" the girl assured him.

"Then do not do so. I believe he is seeking to track me and arrest me for the sake of the reward that has been offered."

At that moment, two men, unseen by the young couple at the gate, paused on the opposite side of the street. One of the men was Sheriff Kidd, for his apprehension," replied Race.

"By gravy! There's Sandy Howe and ther sculema'am!" said the sheriff, in a thrilling whisper.

"Yes. The young thief has dared to clandestinely return here. Now is your chance to re-arrest him, and so serve the ends of justice, and at the same time gain the reward we have offered for his apprehension," replied Race.

Kidd started across the street, fully determined that Sandy Howe should not escape him this time. And Isaac Race watched the couple at the gate and saw that as the sheriff drew nearer, he was not observed.

#### CHAPTER V.—A Light In the Old Church Steeple Again.

The sheriff had gained the middle of the road, and he was already congratulating himself that Sandy would in all likelihood remain oblivious to his approach until it was too late for flight, when a shrill piping voice broke the silence of the night.

"Good-evenin', Sheriff Kidd!" the voice called out, and all within hearing knew that Scud Spreckels had spoken.

Sandy turned like a flash, and saw the sheriff. A startled cry escaped his lips, and he bounded away. Myra flushed and trembled. It was a moment of thrilling emotions for her. But she thought only of her friend Sandy, whom she had met in place of Lucy Blake, the banker's daughter. As Sandy fled, the unwieldy sheriff started in pursuit of him. Impeded, however, as he was by his big buffalo overcoat, his speed was not great.

"Durn Scud Spreckels! Drat his hide, ef he hadn't hollered out jist then I'd a had him sure,"



vociferated the sheriff, and he mentally vowed to "warm that consarned boy's jacket fer him" at the first favorable opportunity.

The sheriff floundered on, but Sandy Howe was now out of sight, and Scud felt sure he was out of immediate danger, too. Upon reaching home the lad had found his mother quite ill, and he was on his way to call the village doctor when he saw Kidd stealing upon Sandy Howe. Of course, the shrewd boy had only called out a salutation to his natural enemy, the sheriff, in order to warn Sandy. Scud might be "a very bad boy," as the old women of the village declared, but his heart was in the right place, and he always stood by a friend in time of need. As he was hastening homeward he suddenly became aware that someone was following him. In a moment Scud made the discovery that Mr. Mills was the person behind him.

"Wonder now what that feller wants of me?" muttered the boy, and he came to a halt.

Mills quickly came up.

"You did it well," said he, smiling.

"Did what well?" asked Scud, most innocently.

"Oh, I saw it all. You warned the young man of the sheriff's approach very neatly."

"Then Sandy ran right by yew, Mister Mills?"

"Yes. He passed close by me. I could have stopped him."

"Why didn't yew do it?" asked Scud in great surprise.

"Because I do not believe he is guilty."

"Do ye wreally mean that?"

"Yes. I really believe Sandy Howe is innocent of all knowledge of the bank robbery."

"Put her there!" cried Scud, impulsively extending one grimy hand. "I tuck a sort of dislike agin yer fust off 'cause yer took me fer a rascal, but I guess yew are like a singed cat, a heap better than yew look."

They conversed pleasantly, and very soon Scud decided mentally that Mills was a "fust-rate feller." Presently Scud asked:

"Why don't you think Sandy robbed the bank?"

"Well, that's a leading question. Some way, I've formed a good opinion of the young man," replied Mills, evasively.

"Hello! Look yonder! Bless me if there ain't a light in the old church steeple!" exclaimed Scud just then.

Mr. Mills glanced quickly in the direction the boy indicated, and he saw a light flash for a moment in the window of the old church tower.

"There's nuthin' goin' on there to-night. It must be ther ghost. Yew know the old church hez got a ghost?" continued Scud.

"Well, ghost or no ghost, there's suthin' queer a-goin' on about the old church o' nights. I know suthin' about it."

"Let's hasten to the church, and investigate," said Mills.

Scud assented, and running rapidly, they soon reached the old building. A moment later a startling incident occurred.

door yielded, and he threw it open. At the same moment a dark form rushed forth. Mr. Mills made an effort to detain the man who rushed out of the church, and for his pains he received a stunning blow in the face. As Scud's companion fell, the man who had struck him down fled precipitately. By the time Mills regained his feet the unknown had disappeared in the gloom. Scud had failed to discern his features. But in reply to Mills' eager inquiry as to whether or not he had recognized the man Scud replied:

"I didn't git a good squint at him. But I reckon he was the same feller that scared Miss Richardson, the schoolmarm, at the old house."

"There is a mystery here. A deep mystery of some sort, I am pretty well convinced. But whether or not it relates to the secret of the bank robbers, I cannot say," mused Mills.

Mills and Scud separated after walking back to the village. The following morning Lucy Blake and her brother Dick were at the window of the cozy sitting-room in the banker's house when Myra Richardson, looking as neat and attractive as possible, went on her way to the schoolhouse. Smiles and bows were exchanged, and then Lucy ran out to the gate to learn what message Sandy Howe had given Myra for her the preceding night. Dick watched the two girls from the window, and now that he had fallen into the error of thinking Sandy Howe had won Myra, he experienced something of the bitterness of disappointed affection.

Lucy presently rejoined her brother, and noting his woe-begone expression, she rallied him about it. Dick wanted to have someone share his troubles, and in a few words he told his sister all. He dwelt upon his chagrin and disappointment and regretted that a cloud had fallen upon the one he thought Myra preferred to himself. Lucy blushed consciously at the mention of Sandy Howe's name, and presently, as her brother's blunder dawned upon her in an amusing light, she said laughingly:

"Dick, my sympathy actually compels me to make a confession. Sandy Howe and myself are engaged. Father objected, and we kept it all a secret. Myra met Sandy at my request, because I could not leave the house."

Dick sprang up as if electrified, and exclaimed delightedly:

"And there is nothing between them? Between Myra and Sandy, I mean?"

"Nothing in the world except yourself," replied Lucy, gayly.

Dick put on his hat, and turned to the door.

"Where are you going?" asked his sister, teasingly.

"To school—to learn something of more importance to me just now than anything else."

"A lesson of love!" laughed Lucy.

But Dick was out of ear-shot. He arrived at the schoolhouse in time to find Myra alone, not one of her scholars having as yet come. Dick, in a manly, straightforward way, told Myra what she already knew, and half an hour later he left the schoolhouse as happy as mortal could well be, for he and Myra had plighted their troth. In the supreme happiness of that hour, as he walked homeward, Dick's thoughts found expression in words. He had a habit of thus formulating his thoughts sometimes.

## CHAPTER VI.—The Old Mill In the Woods.

As soon as Mills and Scud arrived at the church the former seized the handle of the door and tried to open it. Not a little to his surprise the



"Myra shall be my wife. Then I shall have the right to care for her and protect her. The dear girl's struggle for a livelihood as a country schoolteacher shall soon come to an end."

The banker's son was passing a high, snow-clad wall, and a moment after he uttered the words we have recorded a human head was raised above the top of the wall and a pair of evil eyes looked after Dick's retreating form.

"You shall never wed Myra Richardson—never! My plot for a fortune demands that she should soon be in my power—at my mercy—and then—"

The speaker was the villain who had surprised Myra in the deserted cottage. He was the mysterious secret comrade, or at least acquaintance, of Isaac Race, the bank cashier. He suddenly ceased speaking, as he saw Sheriff Kidd coming down the street in the direction Dick Blake was taking. Instantly the mysterious man disappeared behind the wall. Great indeed would have been Dick Blake's solicitude and alarm on Myra's account if he could have heard the soliloquy of the villain behind the wall.

While the events just related were transpiring, Scud Spreckels was on his way through a strip of woods adjacent to the village. At no great distance from the village he came in sight of an old mill. The great water wheel had long been silent, and now it was incased in ice. The old structure was falling into decay through neglect. The preceding night, after he parted with Mills, Scud met Sandy Howe. The young fugitive was lurking near Scud's home. A conversation had taken place. Sandy told Scud that he had made himself a hiding place in the old mill. Scud agreed to bring his friend certain necessary articles and some food in the morning, and he was now on his way to make that promise good. The food and other articles bought by Scud were gladly received by Sandy, and he and the village bad boy had a long talk, and they agreed to work together secretly to find out the real thief who had stolen the bonds from the bank. Scud finally left the old mill, but he promised to come again that night.

The shadows that come as the heralds of darkness at the close of day were deepening over the village, and Isaac Race was seated alone in a little room in his cottage, which was fitted up as a library.

"I would gladly rid myself of this fellow, Nick Gardner, who has come to me with the prison taint yet upon him, if I could; but he has too powerful a hold upon me, and there is gold in the scheme he asks me to join him in against Myra Richardson," mused the cashier.

The shadows grew longer. Darkness became complete. All at once Isaac Race was startled by a rap on the window, and then a voice reached him.

"Nick Gardner! He has ventured here," exclaimed Race, in angry tones, and striding to the door he opened it.

The man whom he had seen with him before immediately entered Race's presence.

"Why are you here?" demanded Race, with some asperity.

"To help you fix a rival. I've found Sandy Howe. Come with me, and we'll secure him."

"Where is the young rascal?"

"In the old mill upstream."

Race and Nick Gardner at once set out for the old mill. All was silence and darkness there when they arrived. But they stealthily entered. Gardner led the way to the room where we have seen Sandy. Suddenly he dashed open the door, and the next moment he and Sandy were clinched in a desperate struggle.

## CHAPTER VII.—The Counterfeiters of the Old Mill.

Scud Spreckels was not present in the old mill when Isaac Race and his companion arrived there. The first intimation Sandy received of the approach of his enemies came when the door opened. Involuntarily Sandy sprang up and made a rush to pass the foremost of the intruders. Then it was that Nick Gardner clutched him and that they engaged in a desperate struggle. Isaac Race was coming close behind Gardner. Sandy fought with desperation, and as he was athletic and an accomplished wrestler, he succeeded in hurling Gardner upon the floor. Then the hunted youth might have escaped had it not been for the cowardly comrade of the ex-convict—for such Gardner really was. Race, seeing that the young clerk was to slip through his hands, snatched up a heavy billet of wood which he found conveniently at hand upon the floor, and dealt Sandy a blow from behind.

The blow descended upon the young man's head and he fell stunned and bleeding at the cashier's feet. Nick Gardner sprang up, and in a moment he and Race had bound Sandy's hands behind his back by means of some stout bits of rope which Gardner produced. After congratulating themselves upon Sandy's capture, the two men were considering how they should best get him to the village, when Gardner said:

"So Sheriff Kidd thinks the counterfeiters who have been flooding the country hereabouts with bad money are located in this vicinity?"

"Yes," assented Race, "and the old fool really has an idea he is shrewd enough to ferret out the coiners. He declared he hoped to find their headquarters and capture them."

Race laughed, and Gardner joined in his merriment.

"Whether Kidd is right or not in thinking the coiners are located near here I can't say, of course. But I am certain of one thing."

"What's that?" asked Gardner.

"That they are remarkably clever experts. We took in considerable of their 'queer' money at the bank before we began to detect it. It was good enough to deceive an expert like myself. Here is one of the half-dollars, and here is a dollar of the coiners' make."

Race produced the two coins as he spoke.

"Let me see them," requested Gardner, and the cashier surrendered them to his hand. The light of a lantern belonging to Sandy Howe illuminated the little room of the mill.

Holding the coins to the light, so that he could obtain a distinct view of them, Gardner examined them.

"If Gill Baldock didn't make these shiners, he must have sold the secret of their manufacture—"



which he an' I discovered years ago—to someone else."

"Hark!" admonished Race at that juncture, raising his hand with a significant gesture to enjoin silence.

Both heard the sound of footsteps and voices. It was evident that several persons were approaching the mill. Race and Gardner advanced stealthily to a dusty window, and peered through it. The light from a lantern, blazing like a star in the gloom that environed the old mill, met their sight. The light of the lantern also revealed to them the dimly outlined form of five men. As they drew nearer Gardner all at once gave a violent start, and exclaimed in low, surprised tones:

"Gill Baldock by all the fates!"

A moment later the five men were in the mill below stairs.

"Come, boys, let's get down to the cave at once," a voice which Gardner recognized as belonging to Gill Baldock was heard to utter.

"Come on," said Gardner. "I'm goin' down to see the boys. I reckon they will be glad to have me join 'em agin," Gardner continued, and he started to descend the stairs.

Race followed the ex-counterfeiter and convict. A sudden silence fell upon the men below. It seemed they had heard the men on the stairs. An instant elapsed. Then the door at the foot of the flight was dashed open. Race and Gardner were now half-way down the stairs. They halted instantly as the door opened, for they beheld a group of fierce-looking men. Foremost among the men at the foot of the stairs Gardner recognized Gill Baldock. And at the same moment Baldock recognized Gardner.

"You here! My old pal, Nick Gardner, by all that's lucky!" exclaimed the former.

"Right you are, Gill, and this gentleman is a friend of mine. So put up your guns. It's all right," replied the coiner.

"Isaac Race, the bank cashier!" exclaimed Baldock. "He is the last man I should expect to find with you."

#### CHAPTER VIII.—Sandy Becomes A Prisoner of A Secret Cave.

In low tones Baldock and Gardner conversed for some moments. Then Baldock turned to Race and said:

"Since you are Gardner's friend we will regard you as our friend, too. You overheard me mention a cave. You understand who and what we are, and so it is now in your power to betray us if you are allowed to depart."

"You need have no fears of my betraying you," Race hastened to say.

"Very good. I'll trust you. And now, since Gardner has concluded to join me and remain with my party of 'money makers,' we will say good-evening to you."

As Baldock thus spoke one of his men who was standing near the door of the stairs which had been closed during the preceding conversation, suddenly threw the door open. He leaped forward as he did so, and the succeeding moment he dragged a young man with his hands bound behind his back out into the sight of the astonished

coiners. The latter surged upon him with angry exclamations, and Sandy Howe—for he of course it was—felt that he had stumbled into a situation of peril.

"Who are you?" demanded Baldock, fiercely.

"My name is Sandy Howe," replied the young clerk.

"And he is my prisoner. We had but just surprised and captured him in his hiding place upstairs when you arrived," Race hastened to say.

"Sandy Howe. The young man accused of robbing the village bank, eh?" demanded Baldock, eying the clerk with interest.

"Yes. He is the thief, and I have arrested him on account of the robbery," replied Race.

"Villain, you know I am innocent! You have from the outset sought to fix the crime on me. But I have all along suspected you," cried Sandy.

"The circumstances all point at you as the thief. How dare you accuse me!" cried Race.

"Since I know you are the associate of criminals, professional counterfeiters, and that there is a secret in your life you fear to have revealed, I feel that you are open to suspicion of the robbery," replied Sandy.

"By heavens! he has heard our conversation!" exclaimed Gardner.

"Come, men, we are losing time. March the prisoner along. Now for the cave," ordered Baldock.

Two of the coiners placed themselves beside Sandy. A few whispered words were exchanged between Race, Gardner and Baldock. Then, as the first-mentioned left the mill and directed his steps in the direction of the village, Baldock, lantern in hand, led the way down the stairs to the basement beside the frozen water, where the great wheel stood fettered by the ice. Moving aside a small section of the plank wall, which was built against the hillside, the coiners disclosed the entrance of a most artfully concealed passage. The section of the plank wall that concealed the entrance of the underground passage was closed by the last man who passed through it. At a distance of perhaps a hundred feet the passage under the hill widened out into a spacious cave.

Sandy saw at once that the cavern was the retreat of the coiners. He was ignorant of the coiners' art, but the furnaces, retorts, dies, molds and stamping presses at hand told their own story. Sleeping bunks had been built at one side of the cave, and it was evident that the counterfeiters had provided themselves with many things with which to make themselves comfortable in the cave. Sandy was secured to a rocky pillar, and he saw Baldock, Gardner and the others withdraw to a distance out of earshot of his position. All at once Gardner's voice, which was suddenly raised to a loud key, distinctly reached Sandy's hearing. The coiner said:

"With the girl Myra Richardson here in my power, the way to the possession of wealth such as we never hoped to win will be well nigh open to us."

#### CHAPTER IX.—A Knife-Duel Underground.

Sandy Howe was startled and surprised beyond measure by what he heard. He could scarcely believe that he had heard aright, and that there



was a plot on foot against Myra. But Sandy heard no more. The further conversation of the coiners was carried on in whispers. Evidently they determined to respite Sandy, for he was not molested that night, and some hours later silence reigned in the cave. Sandy had almost fallen into a doze. But he was not destined to fall into the oft-times blessed oblivion of slumber just then. A sudden sound awakened him wholly. A moment subsequently he discovered a moving form along the rocky side-wall of the cavern and approaching his position. The man was stealing toward Sandy for a secret purpose: that much was clear, else would he not guard every movement as he did that his comrades might not detect him. In a moment he was at Sandy Howe's side.

"Hist! not a word above the faintest whisper," uttered the man who was known among the band as Ben Bramble. "Bill was my pal; we were like brothers. I made poor old Bill a promise just before he died when you, though at his bedside, were too much overcome by grief to heed what was taking place. I promised Bill to stand your friend against the bank if you ever got into danger through them, and I want to keep my word and help you escape."

"I thank you from my heart. Sever my bonds, and I will creep away while all the men are sleeping," replied Sandy.

"Well, now for it," said Bramble, springing to Sandy's side and severing his bonds with a few swift strokes of his knife.

Almost instantly the young clerk was free, and he started with Bramble to leave the cave. But at that moment there came a thrilling surprise for Sandy and his friend. Suddenly one of the band, named Girty, leaped to his feet, and every trace of intimidation vanished from his manner, as he drew his knife and sprung between Sandy and his companion and the door.

"You thought you had outwitted me, but you are the one who is duped, and now I know your traitor's game you have got to walk over my dead body to get away with the young spy!" cried Girty.

At that moment Bramble drew his knife. Girty made a rush at him. The steel blades clashed together, and a terrible knife-duel began.

## CHAPTER X.—Mr. Mills Becomes Sandy's Champion.

Girty had supposed something was wrong at the moment when Bramble began to fraternize with him, and the man then the counterfeiters' band found themselves alone in the cave with the young clerk. It was owing to Bramble's character for treachery that Girty had never been a favorite of Sandy. In fact, the two men had, from the time when they first met, months previously, as members of Gill Baldock's league of "money grubbers," taken an instinctive dislike to each other.

"I never tell him or I am lost. The members of the counter band will be sure to catch me if Girty should tell them that I am a traitor," thought Bramble, desperately.

His eyes flashed with a lurid light, and as the daggers clashed and the duel in the cave was continued he said to Sandy, who stood like one dazed watching the thrilling conflict:

"Away! Go while you can. I know not how soon the others may return. Go, I say. Go!"

Sandy would have tarried to assist Bramble, but the counterfeiter again and again fiercely ordered him away. Reluctantly, then, the young clerk left the man who had befriended him to fight out the desperate conflict for life alone. But it did not occur to Sandy, in his ignorance of the laws of the coiners, that the duel must necessarily be a battle to the death. With a clash of steel ringing in his ears, and the heavy panting of the duelists sounding behind him, Sandy rapidly traversed the passage. In a moment or so he arrived at the door leading to the basement of the old mill. To push this aside and enter the dark space, beside the silent ice-locked wheel, and creep up the rickety stairs that threatened to fall under his weight, was for Sandy the work of a few seconds.

Cautiously Sandy quitted the old mill and made his way through the sunny woods in the direction of the village. All at once he heard approaching footsteps. Silently but with celerity of thought the young man crouched down in the shadow of a clump of bushes. A moment elapsed, and Gill Baldock and Nick Gardner went by. For a moment Sandy almost ceased to breathe. He felt the glances of the two men he wished to elude directed toward his place of concealment, and he thought he was destined to discovery. But such was not the fact. Baldock and his companion had no suspicion of the proximity of anyone, and it was only by mere chance that they looked in his direction. When the two counterfeiters had passed his hiding-place, Sandy crept away. In safety—without encountering anyone else—he arrived at the trysting-place where he hoped to meet Lucy. It was in the evergreen grove near the cottage of Race, the bank cashier, that Sandy had thought Scud requested Lucy to meet him.

The young girl was at the appointed place of meeting when Sandy arrived. The lovers' meeting was a joyous one, and professions of undying devotion were exchanged, and then Sandy told Lucy his hopes and plans.

"I believe Isaac Race holds the secret of the robbery, and that he deliberately accused me to work my ruin and separate us forever," said Sandy finally.

"I agree with you. But, oh, Sandy, why have you all along refused to tell why you retained the money, on the night of the robbery, until four o'clock, when Race gave it to you to hand to my father, until nine o'clock?" asked Lucy.

Sandy's face paled.

"You ask what I cannot reveal. Circumstances have played me a cruel game. I am environed by the meshes of a destiny I cannot elude."

"Say not so. Truth and justice must triumph in the end, and if the clouds above your head are dark, let the light of truth shine upon them."

"Yes, I— But who is this?"

At that moment a man emerged from behind a tree, and confronted the lovers.

"That's the traitor!" exclaimed Lucy.



## CHAPTER XI.—Double Trailing.

At the second glance Sandy had recognized the man who called himself "Mr. Mills." We have seen that young man knew the stranger's real character, having acquired that knowledge in Boston. And we are aware that Sandy had warned Myra Richardson against him. Mills was completely surprised at hearing Sandy call him a detective. Lucy was equally astonished, for she had not been taken into her father's confidence regarding Mills. Sandy's first impulse was for flight, but Mills said hastily:

"Fear nothing from me. I know you, Sandy Howe, but I believe you to be an innocent man, and I would befriend you. It is by a mere accident that I have come upon you now."

He spoke earnestly and extended his hand. More astounded than ever, and scarcely convinced of the other's sincerity of purpose, Sandy took his hand.

"You have penetrated my secret, and now I ask you to keep it; I am a detective in the service of Miss Lucy's father, and I am on the trail of the bank robber. Rest easy in the assurance it is not your trail I am following," said Mills.

"I am thankful for that," replied Sandy, fervently.

"One question—did the key of the safe from which the bonds were stolen leave your possession during the five hours, because it was supposed to be held by you, on the night of the robbery?"

"No."

"I believe you, and, therefore, it is my idea the bonds were stolen before you received the key."

"I think so."

"And to-night I mean to make a search for the bonds at the house of the man we suspect. You can assist me. It is necessary that you should be disguised, and if you assent, from this moment you shall be my secret helper, and I will be your unknown aid."

"Gladly I assent."

"Miss Lucy, when next you see your affianced you may not recognize him. But rest assured that he is safe with me," said Mills, turning to Lucy.

"I do not doubt it, and I cannot tell you how happy your assurance of faith in Sandy's integrity has made me," replied Lucy.

Sandy, meanwhile, was thinking of the conversation he had overheard in the counterfeiters' den between Nick Gardner and Ed Hall.

When Lucy had withdrawn to her father's room, and Mills and Sandy found themselves alone, the latter broached the subject of Myra's peril.

"I have reason to think that there is a plan on foot to abduct Myra Richardson, and that numerous villains have a knowledge of some secret relating to the young girl of which she is as yet herself ignorant," said Sandy.

Mills expressed surprise, and Sandy called:

"Here Nick Gardner, who is evidently an old friend of Race's, and the cashier himself are concerned in the scheme."

The other became intensely interested.

"A case of daring abduction, a dark mystery for its motive. You suggest the sort of affair

that demands keen work to ferret out. Tell me all you can about it," he said.

Thus appealed to, Sandy went on to tell that he had overheard certain conspirators conversing, and so got the clue to the proposed abduction. Mills saw he was keeping back something, and he said:

"You are not entirely confiding in me."

"The fact is, I owe my life to a man who might be imperiled through a more open revelation on my part."

"Hist!" said Mills, in a low voice, as Sandy paused.

They were silent, and Sandy caught the sound of footsteps in the grove, which Mills had been the first to hear. A moment elapsed. Then, through the trees two men were seen. They were Isaac Race, the bank-cashier, and Nick Gardner.

"The member of the coiners' band and Race," said Sandy, in a whisper. The young man did not know at the time that he mentioned the coiner. The utterance was inadvertent. But Mills caught it.

"I'll follow those men. Remain in yonder thicket until I return," he said hastily.

Sandy assented, and crept into the cover Mills indicated as he spoke. Mills proceeded stealthily after the two men he meant to secretly track. If he had been near enough he might have overheard a conversation between them that would have startled him greatly.

"Yes," Nick Gardner was saying at the moment when the officer took the trail. "One of our men has recognized the fellow calling himself Mills as a Boston detective. If he isn't down here on the bank robbery case he is after the 'queer' money men."

"And in either case he is a dangerous man," replied Race.

Continuing to converse, the two men went on to Race's house. The officer saw them enter it. Presently they became seated at a window. Under cover of some shrubbery Mills crept nearer. They were still conversing earnestly.

"I tell you he changed his name when he was convicted and sent to prison. Myra Richardson believes he is dead. Once the girl is my wife I'll produce her. Dan Rutledge's trustee will not—cannot refuse to surrender the fortune to me, as Myra's husband," said Nick Gardner.

Just then a dog in the rear of the house began to bark. Mills knew the animal had scented him, and crept away. At a safe distance Mills paused and, still screened by the tree, watched the house. Presently Nick Gardner emerged from it and took his way hastily in the direction of the old mills. Mills followed him, saying mentally:

"So that man is a counterfeiter! How comes it that Sandy Howe has made discoveries relating to the band? The young bank clerk is enveloped in mystery. I should not wonder if some surprising disclosures would be made some day. Still, I am convinced of the young man's innocence and honor."

And while Mills stealthily followed Nick Gardner on his way toward the counterfeiters' rendezvous he was himself followed. Isaac Race knew his dog had found a man's trail. The animal was a Southern bloodhound and a sure tracker. As he reflected upon the matter, Race concluded



that the man whose scent the hound had taken might have been a spy. Mills' leader had been one from the house some little time, and had traversed a considerable distance from it, followed by the officer, when Race made up his mind to follow the scent the dog had taken. Leading the hound, he started on Mills' trail. Great peril now threatened Sandy Howe's champion. But meanwhile let us see how the conflict in the cave ended after Sandy's flight.

## CHAPTER XII.—A Spy Tracked.

Ben Bramble and his antagonist continued their fight in the cave for some time subsequent to the departure of Sandy Howe. It chanced that some time previous to the inauguration of the thrilling duel, the two men had discarded their pistols. The issue was left to the knife. Finally the point of Girty's knife caught on the hilt of Bramble's weapon. The latter gave the weapon a sharp twist, and the steel snapped at the handle. Girty started back with a cry of horror, and clutched the useless broken knife convulsively as he gazed at Bramble with dilating eyes. He thought at that instant that he was at the mercy of his antagonist. But all at once his eyes fell upon his pistol belt. If he could reach that weapon-loaded girdle he might be saved yet. Bramble was a noted knife-thrower. Now he held his blade poised for a deadly cast at his unarmed foe.

"It's your life or mine! I've got to kill you or you'll betray me to Baldock and the band," cried Bramble. "And yet I would spare you!" he added.

The man was not all bad. Now that the supreme moment had come and it seemed that victory was his, Bramble could not slay his adversary who stood before him defenseless.

"Will you come out to battle?" asked Bramble as Girty did not speak.

For answer the desperado made a sudden leap for his pistol belt.

"Hound! I would have given you a chance!" cried Bramble as he sent his knife hurtling through the air at Girty.

The blade struck him between the shoulders, and he fell face downward on the floor. He did not stir. Bramble reached him and secured the weapon. He thought it had penetrated Girty's heart, and that the villain was dead. A sudden alarm seized upon Bramble. He felt the secret start upon his forehead in great cold drops. Lifting the body of Girty he half dragged, half carried it along in the deepest recesses of the cave.

"I must hide him where his remains will never be found," said Bramble.

He feared an arrival. If any of the coiners should return now the chance he would have for life would become very small indeed. Reaching the furthest depths of the cave, Bramble concealed Girty's body in a shallow pit, and then he crept back to the main chamber of the subterranean place. In the angle light Girty had wounded Bramble slightly in the arm. Presently Baldock and Nick Gardner, who had passed Sandy Howe without seeing him, entered the cave. Bramble met them, and, displaying great excitement, while he held up his bleeding arm, he cried:

"The prisoner has escaped. He got loose in some way, and suddenly fell upon me during the absence of Girty, who went out a bit ago."

Baldock and Gardner were surprised and enraged, but they did not think of doubting Bramble's good faith. They did not think it advisable to follow the escaped man. But Gardner had an appointment with Isaac Race for a little later, and very soon he left the cave. Baldock bound up Bramble's arm, and soon two more of the band came in. There was some discussion among the men of the band, and it was decided that Sandy Howe would hardly dare immediately show himself to the authorities to tell the officers of the cave band's presence.

But now to return to Mills. He kept Nick Gardner in sight as he tracked him from Isaac Race's House until the coiner entered the old mill. Then, proceeding with great caution and stealthiness, Mills gained an entrance. He heard Gardner on the stairs. After waiting a moment or so Mills stole down the flight as noiselessly as possible. Meantime Gardner had passed through the secret door and closed it. Presently Mills found the secret door, and exuberantly pushed it aside a short distance and then listened. He heard nothing. But in the distance a ray of light came to him. Noiselessly the daring man entered the passage and closed the door. A few moments later Isaac Race and his bloodhound were in the mill on Mills' track. To the door of the secret passage the hound led the cashier.

By this time Mills was in the main chamber of the cave. He had gained that apartment stealthily, and creeping along the side-wall, concealed by the shadows, he arrived at one of several labyrinthine passages, at the rear of the cave-room. At the mouth of one of these passages he secreted himself, and at a short distance seated about a rude table were Baldock, Gardner, and two others. Mills could hear their talk. Ben Bramble was one of the men at the table, and he was going over the story he had invented to account for Sandy Howe's escape.

All that Mills heard. But suddenly a new sound reached his hearing. The snarling whine of Isaac Race's bloodhound came to his ears. The succeeding moment he discerned the fierce animal and his master coming forward along the passage leading from the mill. The hound's nose was on the ground. The keen-scented animal was following the scent of the officer. Discovery seemed certain. Mills began a swift, noiseless retreat, into the unknown labyrinths of the cavern. The coiners at the table leaped to their feet at the sight of Isaac Race and his bloodhound.

"Why are you here with the dog?" demanded Baldock.

"Because the dog is leading me on the trail of a spy!" replied Race.

"Release the dog! Come on, men! We'll follow the hound. Death to the spy!" cried Baldock.

Isaac Race cast off the chain. The dog uttered a howl and sprang forward. Straight on Mills' trail along the passage in the rear of the main cavern went the hound. The cashier followed him was to be expected. He was at the end of a passage. The secret wall behind him barred his flight. He saw the great door of the mill by the mountain light. Of a sudden he saw the faces of the men who were behind the curtain. Mills



raised his revolver, leveled it at the hound, and pressed the trigger. But just then the intelligent animal leaped aside, as though he had seen the officer and understood what he was about to do. The bullet passed over the hound's head. Miles staggered backward. The rocks gave way under his feet, and he fell backward into a pit. His foes thronged forward, and he could hear them stumbling among the debris. At that thrilling moment a pair of human hands clutched him in the darkness.

### CHAPTER XIII.—In the Old Church.

Sandy Howe remained in hiding where Mills left him when he went to follow Isaac Race, and Nick Gardner. But as the time went by, and the officer did not return the young man became anxious and alarmed. Sandy finally started toward Race Cottage. Cautiously he made his way in the direction of the cashier's home, but he had not gone far when he heard a cheery whistle, and saw Scud Spreckles coming along the adjacent highway.

"Scud!" called Sandy from behind a tree.

The village bad boy halted instantly.

"Hello! Thought I heard someone sing out to me," he exclaimed, looking about rather blankly as he saw no one.

Sandy stepped out into view, having first ascertained that there was no one at hand to observe his movement. Sandy was surprised to see Scud there. Sandy asked what had recently befallen him, but he made no allusion to the counter-

"Of course, I can now no longer make my money in the old mill," Sandy concluded.

"Of course not. But I say, Sandy, I've got an idea. Are you afraid of spooks?"

"No, I am not afraid of anything supernatural."

"The old church be just the place for you to hide in. Everybody says the old church is haunted, an' I've seen the ghost. You bet no one will trouble you there."

"And perhaps, Scud, I may find out the mystery of the old church. It's a hundred feet above the house-tops."

"Don't wonder a bit. But if that healthy fellow, you, you want to sail into him, you're a goner."

"I'll look out for myself. To-night I'll go to the old church. So please don't get in the way of food," said Sandy.

He gave Scud some money, and then in a few minutes he told the lad of the meeting between him and the officer, and how he had been rescued. Scud was naturally curious, and he asked Sandy a great many questions, and then he said:

"Well, I say, Mr. Sandy, I'll be up with you to-night. But I can't stay here any longer. I've got to go to the post-office at a hurry."

You'll see me to-night at the old church. So good-by. Look out for yourself and the ghost."

"Good-by, Scud."

The boy had gone a few paces, when he halted and added:

"I almost forgot to tell you, I borrowed Seth Bates's bear-trap to-night, and I set it up in the old church tower. Look out for it. It's right beside the trap-door in the belfry floor, over the organ loft."

"All right. I'll not forget about the bear-trap. But what did you bait it with, Scud?" asked Sandy, laughing.

"A jug of cider. Durn my buttons if I don't think the ghost will take a nip these cold nights," replied Scud, and he hurried on.

The lady was in a happy frame of mind that morning.

"There's fun ahead," said he to himself. "To-day old Kidd as the head of one of the school committee is a-comin' ter examine the school, an' there's a-goin' to speak pieces an' sich."

While Scud went whistling on his way to the village post-office Sandy made up his mind to try to find out what had become of Mills. Through the grove the wrongfully accused fugitive approached the house of the cashier. When he was pretty near the cottage he saw one of the school committee knock at the door. It was opened by Isaac Race's mother, a stern old woman—who seldom had a pleasant word for anyone, and who was the terror of all the children of the neighborhood.

"Where is Mr. Race? I would like to see him a moment," said the school committeeman, when Miss Abigail Race opened the door.

"Isaac has just gone off somewhere with his dog. I'd a-thought he'd started off huntin' if he had taken his gun with him, for the hound certainly was a-trackin' suthin'," replied the old woman.

"Well, I jist called at Sheriff Kidd's request to invite Mr. Race ter visit the deestric school with the committee this arternoon," answered the man.

"Reckon Isaac won't 'tend. Bank don't close till four. But I'll tell him when he comes home."

Miss Abigail closed the door, and the school committeeman went away, saying something to himself about "a famine in manners where Miss Abigail was raised."

Sandy had heard what was said. He knew that if Isaac Race and Gardner discovered Mills spying upon them they were the sort of persons to resort to desperate measures against the officer. Sandy reflected for a moment. He would have sought to follow Race if he could. But he had not left a trail. There was danger of discovery every moment, and much as he was interested in the fate of the officer who had become his enemy, he decided to wait.

The better part for him now. So under cover of fences and stone walls, he made his way to the old church, in whose steeple—100 feet above the house-tops—mysterious lights and a moving form had so often been seen since the bank was robbed.

Sandy found it easy to gain access to the old church by means of a window. There was plenty of fuel at hand, and he made a coal fire in the great stove. The ground near the window was covered with snow, and putting a couple of pew cushions on the floor between the window and the fire, he



lay down and soon fell asleep. Sandy had not had a good sleep for days. He was very warm and comfortable there beside the fire in the old church, and he slept like a log. The day went by, night came, and still, making up for lost time, Sandy slept on. Darkness enveloped the earth, and the gloom in the old church became complete. The fire Sandy had kindled had gone out, and it was getting cold and chilly. Still the sleeper did not awaken; but feeling the change of temperature, he drew one of the cushions over him mechanically, moved uneasily, and muttered in his dreams.

And while Sandy slept a dark form entered the old church, opening a door by means of a key. The intruder was a man masked and robed in a large black cloak. He was followed by a dumb companion. A great dog trotted noiselessly at his heels. The man passed Sandy and did not discover him. He went up the stairs leading to the choir loft and thence to the belfry. The dog remained behind. He sniffed the air and presently put his nose to the floor and trotted down the aisle toward Sandy. A moment later the young man was awakened. Something cold came in contact with his face. He started up in alarm. Then the snarling voice of a bloodhound rang in his ears, and a great, gaunt canine form loomed up before him.

#### CHAPTER XIV.—Sandy Plays Burglar.

Sandy Howe's awakening in the old church, under the thrilling circumstances recorded, might well have unnerved anyone. For an instant he believed himself the victim of a hideous dream, and that what he saw was a specter of his visions. But again the fierce snarl of the great dog sounded, and, becoming fully aroused, Sandy realized the truth. He recognized the dog, at a second glance, as the property of Isaac Race. The bloodhound had an evil reputation in the village, and he had proved his ferocity by tearing a peddler almost to pieces. At that instant Sandy heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs leading to the organ-loft.

Sandy knew the well-trained hound, with the blood of the Southern man-hunting dogs of other days in his veins, would pounce upon him if he attempted to arise. But the footsteps he heard were surely approaching. He heard them drawing nearer. Presently they sounded at the foot of the stairs. Sandy was desperate. He believed Isaac Race, his jealous enemy, was at hand. When he fled from the church, he had seen a revolver belonging to one of the band. The weapon was loaded and ready for instant use. He thrust his hand into his pocket and drew it out. He had resolved to shoot the hound if necessary. It was a thrilling moment. The man came nearer. All at once he saw the light of a dark lantern which he carried in his hand. The light flashed upon Sandy and the great hound. A startled exclamation came from the lips of the dark-faced form in the doorway as he beheld the gaunt hound held at his feet. Sandy started and recognized the voice of Isaac Race, but he was not positive.

"Call off the dog!" said Sandy, shifting his revolver until it covered the man in the mask.

As Sandy spoke the sound of voices was heard without the church. Among them the young clerk recognized the voice of Sheriff Kidd. In a moment it flashed upon Sandy's mind that it was the regular night for the meeting of the church choir, of which Sheriff Kidd was the leader. At the sound of voices the man in the mask gave a violent start; then he clutched the great hound by the collar, and darted with the animal for a window on the side of the building opposite from that on which the villagers were approaching. Sandy was on his feet in an instant. The mask and his dog passed through the window a moment before Sheriff Kidd and the members of the church choir entered the building. Sandy darted to the window by which the man in the mask had made his exit, and leaped through it just in time to escape discovery by the sheriff. But when Sandy looked about for the man he supposed to be Isaac Race, he failed to discern him. It appeared that he must have fled instantly to the cover of the adjacent grove. The young man recollected that the village sewing society was to meet that night, and he recalled to mind the fact that Mills had proposed to visit Race's house secretly, provided the bank cashier and his sister attended the society. Sandy resolved to make the venture alone if all went well. But first he wished to know if Mills had returned to his boarding-place. Luck favored him. As he was gliding away from the church he met Scud. Sandy at once asked Scud to run round to Mr. Mills' boarding-house, and try to find out if the officer had come home.

"All right, I'll do it, though if I'm late back to choir practice old Kidd will give me fits. You see, they are in a hurry to-night, for the members of the choir are invited to join the sewing society after the practice, an' help eat Widder Hatch's doughnuts an' drink old cider," said Scud.

Then he hurried away. He soon returned.

"Mills hasn't been to his boardin'-house since morning," Scud reported.

"Then it is as I feared. Mills is in trouble. I suspect he is in the power of enemies if he has not been killed. Scud," continued Sandy, seriously, "I want you to carry a certain message for me to Myra Richardson. I have already too long neglected to warn her of danger she does not suspect."

"I'll do anything for Miss Myra or you," replied Scud, impulsively.

"Thanks. Now, listen. Say to Myra privately as soon as you find an opportunity to do so, 'Sandy Howe says you are in danger of abduction by men who hold some secret relating to yourself of which you are ignorant. Be on your guard. In no case venture out alone at night.'"

"I'll do it. I'll repeat what you said to Miss Myra this very night. She will be at the sewing society. But, I say, Sandy, I'm afraid there's trouble brewing for Myra on your account. Race and Kidd have let it out that she was seen to meet you secretly, and that she was seen to meet the Widder Hatch say she shouldn't send her daughter to school to 'such a creature' any longer. Why, the old gossips say Myra is probably in league with you in the bank robbery."

"The wretches. How can they think badly of such a pure, noble girl as Myra."



"I dunno. I guess all the wimmin' folks are afraid of her because she is good-looking."

"Well, run along to church now. I'm off for the W. H. Hotel to play the spy there, and this night at all hazards I'll make a move toward the solution of the mystery of the bank robbery. I am going to search Race's house."

Sandy hastened to the church, and Sandy made his way to the house where the sewing society was to meet. Concealed near it he watched the streets as they came. Half an hour after he had begun to watch the house Isaac Race and his sister arrived. Then Sandy hastened away to the cashier's house. The great hound, as the young man immediately found out, was chained in the barn in the rear.

"Now to enter Race Cottage and search for the missing bonds," said Sandy, when he had made sure the dog could not get loose. In a few minutes he had forced open the door and entered the interior of the house. Sandy proceeded at once to Race's writing room, which was filled up like a library. But scarcely had he entered the room when he heard a sound behind him. Turning, he saw Nick Gardner. Before Sandy could get his revolver, the desperado had clutched him by the throat.

"So I've got ye agin! You gave the cave men the slip once, but you won't do it again," he cried.

When Sandy was unconscious and helpless, Gardner seized him and laid him in a great chair, and thrust a gag in his mouth.

"Now, then, to wait until Race returns. It was lucky that I happened here to-night to see Race. Otherwise the young fellow might have ransacked the house undisturbed, and there is no telling what secrets of the past he might have learned from the private papers in the desk drawer," muttered Gardner, when he had secured Sandy.

Then he went to the cellar, and brought a flask of liquor, with which he solaced himself beside the kitchen fire until the return of Isaac Race and his sister from the sewing society. Race was surprised at finding Gardner in possession, but he experienced a far greater surprise when Gardner conducted him into the library, and he beheld Sandy lying in the great chair. The young man had now regained his senses, and he met Gardner with a look which Race turned upon him nervously.

"How did you capture him?" asked Race, eagerly.

Gardner looked meaningfully at Miss Abigail, who stood behind her nefarious brother.

"You can speak for me before my sister, for I am only in my confidence," replied Gardner.

Gardner then went on and related how he had captured Sandy in the house and conducted him.

"Well done. And now I am resolved he shall be a prisoner until I can get him out of the cave. He was yet a prisoner in the cave," replied Race.

"What is the plan?" asked Gardner.

"A confession," replied the desperado.

"He, that's a good idea! I am sure I can get him to confess. I am sure I can get him to confess. I am sure I can get him to confess."

"Yes, yes! And he shall sign it! And he shall sign it!"

that evidence of his guilt I can surely turn Lucy Blake against him," said Race.

"And secure his conviction and imprisonment. Then he'll be well out of your way for a long time, and you will be free to win the banker's daughter," put in Miss Abigail.

"You forget, sister, that by reason of his unfortunate discoveries relating to the cave men, I cannot surrender him to the authorities," responded Race.

"Certainly not. The boys wouldn't hear of such a thing. That you know without my telling you. The first thing he would probably do would be to betray all he knows about the band," Gardner hastened to state.

"Then, when he has signed the confession of the bank-robbery, we'll take him to the cave," Race made answer.

"Good. I approve of that plan. But now a word about the girl, Myra."

"Step this way."

Race led the desperado to an adjoining apartment. Abigail Race followed them. She closed the door behind her so that Sandy Howe might not by any chance overhear what the conspirators were about to say.

"If the girl, Myra Richardson, is to be abducted and forced into a union with yourself, Gardner, it must be accomplished without delay. I should say," Race remarked when they were in the room to which he had conducted the desperado.

"Yes," said Abigail. "For certain things have occurred to-night at the sewin' society to make it imperative that the move you mean to make should not be delayed."

"What has happened?" demanded Gardner.

In a low tone Race went on to relate certain incidents that had occurred that night at the sewing society. When he had concluded Gardner sprang to his feet. He was greatly excited.

"Every hour counts! With Myra Richardson another man's wife my game for gold would be finally blocked," replied Gardner.

"Yes," assented Race.

"The job must be done to-morrow night," Gardner cried. "Myra must be enticed here and captured in your house, Isaac Race."

"No, no! I dare not allow that!" exclaimed the cashier, earnestly.

"You must."

"But the danger! Don't drive me too far, Gardner. Even if you do hold me in your power, by means of my life secret, I may yet become desperate and turn upon you."

"And so doom yourself. No, no! I know you too well to fear that, Isaac Race. But there is no danger."

"Well, state your plan in full."

"I will do so," responded Gardner, and he went on to formulate a cunning scheme he had originated to decoy Myra Richardson into his power. After some further demur Race consented to Gardner's plan, and, upon being promised a certain reward, Abigail Race agreed to assist the conspirators. The details of the nefarious project were then discussed, and everything which the villanous trio could foresee as likely to occur was provided for. Then Race said:

"Now I'll compel Sandy Howe to sign the confession of his guilt as the robber of the bank."

As he spoke he drew from his pocket a folded



document which he opened, and read to his companions. It was a confession, such as a guilty, but penitent man, might really have written, and Gardner complimented the cashier upon its composition.

"Come, we will now return to young Howe," said Race, when he had concluded the reading of the false confession.

With the paper in his hand, he led the way back to the room where he had left Sandy Howe. The young man remained just as his captors had left him. Race read the confession. Then he unbound Sandy's right arm, and removed the gag from his mouth.

"Now, sign the document or die!" he then hissed.

"Never! never!" cried Sandy, in tones of deathless determination.

## CHAPTER XV.—Sheriff Kidd and Scud.

Isaac Race's statement that certain events of importance had occurred that evening at the sewing society was true. The old ladies assembled in full force at the house of Widow Hatch; the "men folks" were expected to drop in some time during the evening in time for refreshments. Scud Sprickels told the truth when he said that the story of Myra Richardson having met Sandy Howe clandestinely at night had been pretty well bruited about the village. The report had found great favor with the village gossips; they regarded it as a particularly sweet morsel, and Myra was remorselessly criticized. There was Mrs. Snaith, the Widow Hatch's particular crony, and half a dozen others, who had children to send to the district school now present at the sewing society when we looked in upon the assemblage. Myra Richardson's "escapade"—as Mrs. Snaith, who laid some claim to education, and boasted that she "took the papers," said—was the main topic.

"Well, I shouldn't wonder if that Richardson gal put young Howe up to steal the bonis," said Mrs. Snaith, digging away with her needle viciously.

"Why don't the school board take action and discharge the shameless thing?" said another.

"I should think they would. Certainly they order. Now, Sheriff Kidd is president of the school board, an' he'll be here to-night. I really feel that it's my bounden duty to speak to him about the matter," replied the widow.

"It's our duty to do so. If the school committee keeps that Richardson gal for a teacher she won't have a single pupil before the week is out, unless Scud Sprickels keeps on a-goin'," said Mrs. Snaith.

"Scud Sprickels is a very bad boy," replied Miss A. Claw, in oracular tones.

"But I hope he ain't too late for the doughnuts and cider!" piped a shrill voice.

Every one turned toward the door, whence the voice came. There upon the threshold stood Scud, grinning and looking by no means disturbed by the unflattering opinion of himself which he had just heard expressed.

"Why, Scudmore, do come in. Where's the sheriff and the rest of the choir?" said the Widow Hatch with cordial manner.

"Oh, old Kidd's a-comin', and so are the rest, but he don't want any cider," replied Scud, entering.

"Why not? Dew tell! I hope the sheriff ain't ill?"

"Oh, no! But he's been down to Bigbee's cider mill all day," replied Scud.

The widow frowned as she said:

"Why, Scudmore, you shouldn't talk like that."

"Well, you'll see when the sheriff gets here," replied the boy.

Isaac Race and his sister had been present for some time. They were conversing aside and had taken no part in the discussion relating to Myra Richardson. A few moments later Sheriff Kidd came in as if he had arrived on a western cyclone. He shook hands with everybody, almost hugged the widow, and pranced about the room in a generally free and easy way which might easily have been taken as evidence of the fact that he had been to the cider mill. Scud had taken a back seat. He had possessed himself of a chair near the door by right of squatter's sovereignty, and the location was diplomatically chosen, as immediate events proved.

"I say, sheriff, what did you have on when you came from the cider mill to-day?" Scud suddenly piped, while much to her indignation he favored Miss Claw with a knowing wink.

"Didn't hev nothin' on. The wagon wuz empty," replied the sheriff.

"But you had suthin' on."

"No, I didn't, nuther."

"Sam Brown said so."

"What did Sam say?"

"Sam says you had a jag on."

Scud was ready for a retreat, as he fired this shot, which caused an audible titter to run around the room. As Scud fled the sheriff retorted: "Brown put the dotted line up to say that, just 'cause I beat him at 'lection for the sheriff last year," and he went back to the fire.

"I am sure Brown is jealous of your great popularity, my dear Mr. Kidd; and now we ladies have a special favor to ask of you, and I'm sure you'll grant it," said the widow.

"Sartin I will, widder—thet is, if I kin," replied Kidd.

Then all the old women surrounded him, and in a moment half a dozen voices had acquainted him with the request that he should summarily discharge Myra Richardson as unfit to teach their children. The sheriff was taken aback. Despite his eccentricities he was a good-hearted, well-meaning old fellow. He didn't want to injure Myra and he said so. But the women urged their case, and he was finally badgered into consenting. Just then there came a knock at the door. The widow opened it, and a hush fell upon the company as Myra Richardson, looking pure and beautiful, entered alone.

## CHAPTER XVI.—The Test of True Love.

Instinctively Myra felt that she was unwelcome. The sudden silence, the cold glances, the unfriendly air of the assembled townswomen struck her at once. When the village bad boy fled from the wrath of the sheriff he hastened along the



road a short distance, and then paused to wait the coming of Myra, whom he knew was expected. Presently the young schoolmistress appeared, and Scud hastened to repeat Sandy Howe's message word for word. Myra thanked Scud warmly for his friendly office. A few words more, which need not be recorded, were exchanged, and then the young girl went on to the sewing society. No one but the Widow Hatch greeted Myra, although she said pleasantly: "Good-evening, all."

She looked appealingly at Sheriff Kidd, choked back a little sob. The old fellow pitied Myra, but he felt it to be his duty to deal her the cruel blow.

"I hate ter do it, but I've got to," he said to himself, and then he crossed to Myra.

"Miss Richardson," said he, "I'm ther president of ther school board, as yeou know, an' I hev got a painful duty to perform. Ye see, miss, the wimen folks insist on it, that since you have been meeting Sandy Howe, the bank robber, o' nights, you ain't fit to teach the district school no more."

"Cruel! Unjust! But such is the fate of the poor and friendless. I will go—but where? Back to my poor, widowed mother, whose poverty I hoped to dispel," said the girl.

While he was speaking the door had softly opened, and unseen by Myra or any of the others, two persons appeared therein. As she paused Dick Blake stepped forward, followed by Scud Spreckels. Myra's lover crossed to her side and said:

"Come with me, Myra. Come to my heart and home, and if anyone dare breathe another word against my future wife, he or she shall answer to me for the base calumny."

Myra took Dick's arm and, while the people present stood abashed and speechless, the young lovers passed from their midst. And Scud Spreckels followed them.

Meanwhile, when Mills the detective fell into the pit in the coiner's cave he felt a pair of hands clutch him. The detective had tumbled into the same pit into which Bramble hurled Girty's body. And Girty was yet alive. More than that, his wound was far from serious, as Bramble supposed. The coiner's heart leaped to his throat. At the same instant Mills freed himself loose from Girty's weak hold and leaped out of the pit. Then he saw Bramble. Girty struggled part way up the side of the hole, and he pointed at Bramble:

"Don't let him escape! Death to the traitor!" he shouted.

In an instant all the band had barred the way out of the cave against Ben Bramble and Mills, the detective. Bramble shot out the light of the lantern.

Forward! We must escape now, under cover of the darkness, or we are surely doomed," whispered Bramble to Mills.

They advanced quickly. The sound of a short struggle in the darkness ensued. They were back in the cave. They were back in the cave. They gained the passage leading to the old mill, and after a short time their enemies.

## CHAPTER XVII.—Exciting Times at Race House.

Scud Spreckels, after leaving the Widow Hatch's, when Myra Richardson and her noble-hearted young lover had taken their departure, went in the direction of his own humble home. There he had already stored some purchases he had made for Sandy, and some time later, he quitted the house laden with the purchases he had made. He arrived at the old church without encountering anyone, entering it by a window. All was silence. Vainly Scud called Sandy, and he soon convinced himself that the young man was not there. Scud hid his supplies in the church, and quitting it, hastened forward in the direction of Isaac Race's cottage. Scud proceeded with great caution when he came near the cashier's cottage. He crept toward a window, through the blinds of which rays of light fell.

Crouching under the window he listened, and indistinctly heard voices. Raising his head until it was on a level with the window, he peered into the room through a crack in the blinds. Scud saw Sandy a prisoner in the great chair where Nick Gardner had secured him.

"I will compel you to sign the confession. Torture has oftentimes been employed to make the most stubborn will yield. If you persist in being obdurate, it shall be tried upon you," hissed Race.

"I wish I had my gun here," gritted the boy fiercely, "and I guess I'd fix Mr. Race with a bullet about the time he started to play Indian with Sandy."

Just then Miss Abigail said:

"Listen how the hound barks!"

Gardner hastened from the house. Scud quickly crawled into a thicket of rose bushes. Gardner went to the barn, and presently the hound became silent. A few moments elapsed. Then Scud saw Gardner return to the house. As soon as Gardner entered the house Scud crept back to the window. Just then Race took the tongs out of the fire. As he strode toward Sandy, Gardner entered. Inspired by the desperate situation, Scud had picked up a heavy stone. Now, trying the window blinds, he found it yielded noiselessly. Gardner was advancing as if to seize Isaac Race, and the inhuman rascal had almost reached Sandy Howe.

At that instant there came a crash of shattered glass. Scud sent the rock he had picked up through the window with all the force he could command. He hurled the missile at Race, and it struck him on the side of the head. The cashier fell as if he had been struck by a thunderbolt. The red-hot tongs fell from his grasp and fired the carpet. Miss Abigail snatched them up and threw them upon the stone hearth.

"Help!" cried Sandy, struggling desperately with his bonds.

Miss Abigail fell on her knees beside her brother and sought to revive him.

"There is an enemy at hand. I must away," said Gardner.

Then Gardner fled from the house. The next moment Scud threw up the window and leaped into the room. Miss Abigail sprang up with a frightened cry. Sandy looked from the window.



The young clerk's bonds had been severed. Scud was amazed at seeing Sandy free.

"Let's git!" he shouted, laconically, and nothing loath, Sandy followed him as he sprang through the window.

They ran rapidly from the house.

"How did you get loose?" asked Scud.

"Gardner slyly cut my bonds," replied Sandy.

"By Gravy, things are getting mixed!" exclaimed Scud.

#### CHAPTER XVIII.—Mr. Mills Makes a Transformation.

Sandy Howe and Scud went to the old church, and there we will leave them for the present. Meantime Dick Blake escorted Myra to his old home. The young man had already acquainted his father and his sister Lucy with the fact of his engagement to Myra.

The young man upon arriving at his home with his fiancée at once related what had taken place at the sewing society, and it is scarcely necessary to say that his father and sister warmly welcomed Myra. Lucy insisted that Myra should remain with her, and that night the two young girls, in the privacy of Lucy's room, talked for a long time of their hopes and loves before they finally retired. Myra had not failed to tell Dick of the warning of listening peril she had received from Sandy Howe through Scud. Dick was very much alarmed, but he did not allow his solicitude for her safety to become so marked as to increase Myra's fright. He assured his beloved that he would watch over and protect her. But while we, for the time, leave Myra secure at the home of her affianced, we must follow the adventures of Mills, the detective, and Ben Bramble. Closely pursued as they were by the cave men, as they fled along the passage leading from the cavern to the old mill, the detective and Bramble were not overtaken. They went in the direction of the village, but they did not halt until they arrived at the confines of the woods. As they paused, resting with the fatigue of their recent exertions, the two men faced each other. The conversation that followed was peculiar in the mind of the officer. He hastened to say, in a frank and evidently sincere manner:

"You are in doubt as to what our future relations are to be, I think?"

Mills nodded an assent.

"Then let me reassure you. I've made up my mind to turn State's evidence and help you against the men who would have murdered me, simply because I saved an innocent man."

"Now for a leading question. Do the counterfeiters know anything about the bank robbery?"

"No. That is to say, as far as I know they are ignorant of all knowledge regarding it. Race was away on to the bank until some time after the bank robbery."

"Yes."

It was clearly decided that they should creep back to the vicinity of the old mill and watch the place. They did so. The remainder of the day they kept a close watch on the mill. After darkness fell the sound of voices were distinctly heard near the cave, laden with the implements of their illegal trade. Mills and Bramble stealthily fol-

lowed them for a distance among the mountains and finally saw them take possession of some deserted lumberer's cabin, in the wildest part of the mountains. The stars crept very near the corner's camp, and presently they saw Gardner leave it, saying he was going to see I. Lee Race on important business.

Gardner proceeded swiftly in the direction of the village, and Mills and Bramble followed him. They tracked him to the grove near Race's house. There, for the time, they lost their man, and after some delay, during which time Gardner arrived at the cashier's cottage, and surprised and captured Sandy, the officer and Bramble approached the house from the rear. They reached a kitchen window, and through it they saw Gardner seated before the fire in that room alone. Soon after that they witnessed the arrival of I. Lee Race and his sister. Listening then, they for the first gained the information that Sandy was a prisoner. Then Mills began to work one of the detective ruses for which he was justly celebrated. He held a whispered conversation with Bramble, then both stole away from the cashier's house, and went in the direction of the barn. They gained an entrance to that building. Almost immediately the hound, chained therein, began to bark fiercely. We have seen that Gardner left the house to see what disturbed the dog. Mills counted upon drawing either Race or Gardner to the barn, by causing the dog to give tongue. When Gardner entered the barn, Mills and Ben Bramble were stationed just inside the door concealed in the gloom. Scarcely had the ex-convict passed the threshold when he received a heavy blow on the back of the head from a clubbed revolver in Mills's hand. Gardner fell all in a heap at the officer's feet. The powerful blow completely stunned the villain, and he was unable to make any outcry. In a moment Mills and his companion had pinned his arms and secured a rag in his mouth. Then a lantern was produced by the detective, and he drew from his pocket a case containing a small mirror, paint, powder, half a dozen wires, beads, false eyebrows, etc., all carefully packed. Quickly Mills accomplished a complete metamorphosis. He exchanged garments with Gardner and made up his face exactly like that of the ex-convict. The transformation seemed almost miraculous, so complete and perfect was it in every detail.

#### CHAPTER XIX.—A Thrilling Ordeal for Mr. Mills.

Mr. Mills had determined upon a daring strategy. It was now his purpose to liberate Gardner. Of course, his enemy would not so easily surrender for ransom, but it is clear that if he succeeded in his great design, the villain would gain an insight into all of I. Lee Race's secrets.

Mills believed that if he could gain the confidence of I. Lee Race, he would acquire a knowledge of the bank robbery, which was the entire motive for all his proceedings. There was but one thing to be done, and that was to make it appear that he would stand the closest scrutiny, and Ben Bramble said:

"You need have no apprehensions. Just I can make the truth I would never you and Nick



Gardner, and that it was impossible for you to accomplish such a perfect transformation."

"Good. If you say that I feel assured Race will not 'get under my cover.' But now to arrange our immediate plans. I shall go to the house boldly now and personate Gardner. Of course, I shall secretly seek to accomplish the release of Sandy Howe without needless delay. I am his friend, you know. Then I shall continue to play the part of Nick Gardner until my purpose in assuming the character is attained or I am unmasked."

"And what disposition is to be made of the man you are to personate?" asked Ben Bramble.

"You will secretly—under cover of the night—march him to the town jail, and have him locked up. I will give you a note for the jailer, whose acquaintance I have made. In the note I shall request the jailer to keep the fact of Gardner's arrest a profound secret," replied Mills.

Mills did not longer delay in the barn. At once he retraced his steps to the house. Then Ben Bramble got Gardner on his feet, and marched him out of the barn by a rear door. Meanwhile, during the time consumed by Mills in making his disguise, Bramble had chloroformed the hound, using a bottle of the anesthetic supplied him by the officer. A well-saturated sponge on the end of a long stick and thrust under the hound's nose soon quieted him. While Mills entered the house of the bank cashier in his disguise, Ben Bramble marched Gardner in the direction of the village jail. We may state that Bramble encountered no one on the way, and that he arrived at the jail with his captive in safety. The jailer admitted Bramble, and he delivered the note Mills had given him. The jailer promised Bramble that the detective's request that the arrest should be kept a secret should be complied with. Gardner was thrust into a solitary cell and the key was turned upon him. Having seen this done Bramble left the jail. We have seen what transpired in Race's house immediately after Mills appeared therein as Gardner. The mystery of the conduct of the man Sandy and Scud supposed to be the ex-convict is, therefore, explained. When the disguised officer fled from the house his conduct was prompted by the fear that a company of villagers might be at hand. In such an event he knew that he would be called upon, as a supposed stranger, to give an account of himself, and his disguise might be endangered. But Mills did not run far. At the end of the grove, adjacent to the cashier's cottage, he halted. There he became seated on a log, and while he listened for any sounds from the cottage whence he had fled he reflected. Meanwhile Abigail Race soon revived her brother. Finally he declared he was all right again. But he was much excited, and he said:

"I think, sister, that I will flee for Canada while yet I may. The escape of Mills from the cave and the incidents of the night ought to serve to warn me that, so to say, I am walking over a volcano. At any moment Mills may return and seek to arrest me. The boy Scud Spreckels may spread the story of the night's incidents here throughout the village before I am a day older."

"There is one way to secure your safety yet," said the cashier's sister. "If Mills were out of the way, who would you fear?"

"No one. Sandy Howe dare not appear against me, and Scud Spreckels's word would not be taken against mine. By heavens, sister, one crime leads to another. Mills must die, if I can compass his doom."

Just then there came a rap at the door, and the next moment the disguised detective re-entered. He had decided that he might safely return now. Race started at the sudden appearance of Gardner.

"Gardner!" Race suddenly called out.

Mills turned toward him. Instantly he found himself confronted with a leveled revolver in the cashier's hand. The weapon covered the officer's heart.

"Throw up your hands or you are a dead man, Mills!" cried Race, in intense tones.

The officer knew the game was up, and that his life was in deadly peril.

## CHAPTER XX.—In the Old Church Steeple at Midnight.

When Myra Richardson left Squire Blake's house, on the morning of her capture by Gardner and Race, she said she was only going to be absent at the schoolhouse half an hour or so. At an early hour, in consequence of business of importance, Dick and his father had driven out of town in a sledge, bound for an adjacent town.

Lucy was about to accompany Myra to the schoolhouse, when she was prevented from so doing by the arrival of callers, from whom she could not politely excuse herself. As the morning waned and the hour of mid-day approached, and Myra did not return, Lucy Blake became very much alarmed because of her absence. Finally Lucy set out for the school-house, accompanied by a girl friend. Arriving there, they found the door locked. But while the two girls stood before it in a dilemma, Scud Spreckels came whistling by. Lucy hastened to tell him of her fears regarding Myra.

"I found this on the schoolma'am's desk, an' all her books an' things are gone. She's been here and taken them away and left this note."

Scud handed the note to Lucy. It was written on a blank leaf of a copy-book, and Lucy saw that it was directed to herself in Myra's hand. With trembling hands and with a premonition in her heart that she was about to read evil tidings, Lucy opened the missive and read it aloud thus:

"Dear Lucy.—Forgive me the cruel deception I have practiced, but I have fled with Sandy. He loves me better than he ever did you. I believe it is best for all that I should take this step. I fancied I loved your brother, but I find such is not the truth. Ask him in my name to pardon me, for he could never have been happy with me. When you read this Sandy and I will be far away and beyond the reach of pursuit. Your still ever loving,  
Myra."

Just then the voices of Scud and Lucy were heard. A moment later Squire Blake's sledge was seen approaching from the adjacent town, and his son Dick in it. They were returning homeward, and their way led past the schoolhouse.



"Oh, father! Dick! Such terrible news!" cried Lucy, as the sleigh drew near.

"Myra is missing, and we found this note addressed to me on her desk. But I don't believe a word of it," replied Lucy, still loyal to the absent one.

"This is a forgery! An excellent imitation of Myra's hand, but she never wrote that note!" Dick then exclaimed:

"I believe this is the work of the mysterious enemies against whom Sandy Howe warned Myra, and I fear she is in the power of those unknown foes now," he added.

"Yes, yes," assented Squire Blake, "and she must be found and rescued. An organized search must be made for the missing girl at once."

Lucy entered the sledge with her girl friend. Scud rode on, one of the runners, and Dick urged the team homeward as speedily as possible. At last it was noted that Mr. Mills, the officer, was not about the village. Dick vainly sought for the detective, whose real profession was yet a secret from all save the few to whom the reader knows his real character was revealed. Meanwhile Scud had carried Lucy the assurance of Sandy's safety and presence in the old church. So he knew beyond a doubt that the letter stating that Sandy had eloped with Myra was forged. Lucy trusted her brother with the secret, and so he too knew the letter was merely a device to throw suspicion on the young clerk and deceive and estrange Myra's friends. That evening, as usual, Sheriff Kidd and Scud were present at the choir meeting. After the choir was dismissed Sheriff Kidd remained behind to oil the bearing of the bell. Lantern in hand he ascended to the loft above the choir stand. From thence, as we have previously mentioned, a short flight of stairs led upward into the belfry of the steeple, "100 feet above the housetops."

Sheriff Kidd reached the loft, through a trap door, and closed it. The door had a heavy spring lock; for the moment the sheriff forgot that. He turned to go up in the belfry, and passed the trap Scud had set to catch the "ghost," in safety. It was a cold night, and the sheriff rubbed his hands to warm them, as he oiled the bearing of the bell. Finally the work was done. Then he started to return downstairs, but he found the door was fast, and he could not open it. He was imprisoned in the old church tower.

"Gee whizz! I'm good ter stop here all night, I guess. An' it's gittin' colder an' colder. Should I be scared of the ghost?" he added, climbing to one of the windows. The moonlight illuminated the winter scene without, and all at once the sheriff saw Scud Spreckles approaching the church.

"Scudmore, come and let me out. The new-fangled spring lock on the loft has sprung, an' I'm locked up in the church tower!" cried Sheriff Kidd.

"Dassent. I'm skeered of the ghost," replied Scud.

The sheriff's words were a great relief to Scud, who had been waiting for a chance to get out of the church tower. He had been told that the sheriff was locked up, and he had been waiting for a chance to get out. He had been told that the sheriff was locked up, and he had been waiting for a chance to get out. He had been told that the sheriff was locked up, and he had been waiting for a chance to get out.

awful groan of human agony rang out upon the silence, accompanied by the sound of a heavy fall.

## CHAPTER XXI.—Conclusion.

When Ben Bramble left the jail, after he saw Nick Gardner in prison, he went to Race's house expecting to find Mills still there, and to meet him when he left the cashier's residence. Upon arriving at the house in question, Ben Bramble scouted around it for a few moments, and he was not long in learning that Mills was no longer there. Bramble thought Mills would assuredly not leave the neighborhood without seeing him, and so he began to feel somewhat uneasy. Gaining a window Bramble found that he could indistinctly catch the import of a conversation which Race and his sister were engaged in, but a few feet beyond the casement. Ben Bramble gave a violent start as he presently heard the cashier say:

"Now that Mills, the detective, is a prisoner in the power of the coiners, I rest easy once more."

Bramble waited to hear no more. He knew where the coiners had located their new camp, as the reader is aware. The ex-coiner took his course in the direction of the new retreat of the coiners among the hills. He made much better time than Baldock had with his prisoner. Ben Bramble arrived at the coiners' headquarters just as the men whom Baldock had deputized to execute Mills' executioners were about marching their intended victim away. Lurking behind a thicket covered with snow, near the logger's cabin which the "bad money men" had taken possession of, Ben Bramble heard the cold-blooded instructions regarding the prisoner which the chief of the band uttered. And as Mills was marched away by the four executioners, Ben Bramble started to perform his murderous work, Ben Bramble stole after them. He followed the detective's escort to the pathway where they intended the tragedy they had in mind should be consummated. Crouching in a snowy cover, Bramble suddenly uttered, in an assumed voice, a loud cry.

"Help! help!" he uttered faintly.

It was his purpose to divide the men who had doomed Mills. Two of them at once came toward Ben Bramble's hiding place. Then he retreated further, keeping under cover. Two men followed him, for presently they heard his voice further away. Soon they were close upon Bramble. Then he again glided away and went swiftly back to the trail, where the other two men had been left with Mills. Bramble came upon them from behind. One fell senseless under a blow from his clubbed pistol before he saw his assailant. The other turned in time to see Bramble, but before he could utter a cry of alarm the ex-coiner struck him down. The succeeding moment Bramble and Mills were bounding away. As they ran, Bramble severed the cords that confined Mill's wrists, and then the latter tore the gag from his mouth. But all at once a pistol shot rang out from an adjacent thicket. Ben Bramble staggered and would have fallen had not Mills supported him. A bullet from one of the coiners had struck Bramble. Mills returned the shot of the coiner, and he was



heard dashing away. He was one of the men Bramble had led away from Mills. Bramble was seriously injured. But the detective half dragged, half carried him onward. Bramble told Mills of a little cave he had some time previously found, and the officer succeeded in getting him to it. All the remainder of that night and until the next day was well advanced, Mills watched beside Ben Bramble, and the ex-coiner then made a startling revelation.

"To explain my conduct I must reveal a secret, and I will do so before I die, for it will clear up a strong point against Sandy Howe relative to the bank robbery."

"You see, I had a pal among the coiners by the name of Bill Howe, and he was Sandy's half brother. . . Bill, in other days, before he went wrong, had done a good deal for Sandy, and there was a strong bond of brotherly affection between them. Sandy had not seen Bill for years, and he believed he had been slain by the Indians out West, for such an untrue report had been received at his old home. In fact, however, Bill had become a counterfeiter, and he was a member of the cave band. In a drunken quarrel, at a hamlet down the range, Bill was fatally wounded, and I carried him into a lonely hut to die. That was on the afternoon preceding the night of the bank robbery. Then Bill told me about Sandy, and sent me to bring him to his bedside, for he longed to see the boy before he died. I complied with Bill's request, and I met Sandy as he was leaving the bank with the safe key in his hands to go to Squire Blake's and deliver it. When Sandy heard what I came to tell him, he seemed to forget all about the safe key, and putting it in his pocket he hastened with me to his dying half-brother. I feared Bill might make some revelation inimical to the interests of the band if Sandy told them. So I bound him by an oath never to tell where he was that evening, and Bill also exacted a solemn promise from him to the same purpose. Sandy remained with Bill more than four hours. As soon as Bill was dead he set out for Squire Blake's, for he had bethought himself of the safe key. Now you understand why Sandy refused to explain why he retained the key so long that night. Tell him for me that I free him from his pledge of secrecy, and that I request him to make known why he kept the key."

Ben Bramble did not live long after he had made his statement, and when he was dead Mills secretly covered him with a blanket which he found in the cave, and then he set out for the town. It was after nightfall when he arrived there, still attired as Gardner, and partially covered up to conceal that which. In the middle of the village there was a small public house. As Mills entered it under cover of the darkness he was met by one of the villagers, and he told him of Myra Richardson's disappearance. At once the other rushed to the village of Race's home for the hope of obtaining the answer with the mystery of Myra's fate. The officer went some time prowling about Race's house; but the night was well advanced before he made any discovery. At last however he saw Race and Gardner come forth. The two men immediately explained, but before they did so Mills caught a few minutes when they were alone, from which

he gathered that Myra was a prisoner in the cashier's house. As soon as Race and Gardner were out of sight Mills gained access to the house, employing a pick-lock to open a side door. The remarks of the two villains had told him where to look for Myra. Undetected by Miss Abigail, he reached Myra's prison-room, unlocked the door, and a few moments later escorted the fair captive safely from the house. They set out at once for Squire Blake's, and as they were passing the old church the bell in the steeple began to ring furiously. Mills and Myra hastened to the church, and the villagers came running to learn the cause of the ringing of the bell.

When Sheriff Kidd heard the sound of a heavy fall, accompanied by a loud agonized groan in the organ loft, he jumped back from the trap-door in affright and stumbled into Scud's bear-trap. As he did so he made a clutch at the bell rope, and then, for the first time, it occurred to him to ring out an alarm, and he did so. When Mills and Myra, accompanied by the villagers, thronged into the church as they heard Kidd yelling for help they hastened to the choir loft. There they found a man lying face downward on the floor, and the stolen bond that had been abstracted from the bank safe clutched in his hands. The man was turned upon his back, and all saw the face of Isaac Race. The cashier was stone dead. A board which he had moved showed an open space in the floor, from which he had evidently taken the bond. The trap-door was opened and Kidd was released from the bear trap and he came down from the belfry and told his story. A physician was called, and he stated that Race had died of heart disease. Of course, it was plain to all that Race was the thief, and Mills hastened to repeat Bramble's confession. Then everybody saw how Sandy had been wronged, and all were ready to proclaim his innocence. Sandy, concealed in the church, had heard all and all at once he made his presence known and he became the hero of the hour. The coiners were captured next day by the government officers, who had been sent against them, and in prison Gardner, who was secured, too, made a confession to Mills, which was substantially as follows:

Myra Richardson had an uncle by the name of Dan Rutlage, of whom his family had lost all track. He made a fortune by gold discoveries in the West. But he was convicted of a crime and sent to prison for life under an assumed name. In prison he made a will leaving all his property to Myra, and naming certain persons, who were his trustees, to act as executors. Rutlage died in prison, and Gardner, who was a fellow convict, stole the will. He alone knew it had been made. He resolved to keep the secret and marry Myra so as to obtain her inheritance. Gardner also said Race was really an ex-convict. Some time later there was a double wedding at Squire Blacke's, and Sandy and Dick were married to Lucy and Myra. The future of Sandy and Dick and their brides was a happy one, and Scud turned out a successful business man in later years.

Next week's issue will contain "THE BOY EXPLORERS; or, ABANDONED IN THE LAND OF ICE."



### FLASHLESS POWDER

The War Department has just announced the successful development of a new powder for use in small arms and artillery. It is said to possess all the driving power of the type now in use, and at the same time it is smokeless, flashless and impervious to moisture. It will permit night firing without revealing the position of guns.

### INDIANS OWN BILLION REALTY

The American Indians generally are wealthy. Of course, there are some exceptions. The Department of the Interior estimates the value of property owned by them at \$1,000,000,000. This includes forest lands, mineral and oil right, lands ceded and reserved, live stock, and property under the guardianship of the Government.

In addition there is \$25,000,000 in the United States Treasury, representing funds belonging to various tribes of Indians, while in private western banks are funds totaling \$35,000,000. Both funds draw interest ranging from 4 to 6 per cent.

### SAVED PIGEON, BUT LOST LIFE

In trying to save the life of a young pigeon, Harry Lanzillo, a young man of 22 years, living on Lynde street, Boston, received injuries which caused his death. Finding the bird too weak to fly, Lanzillo first placed it on a high post in the grounds of the public library. It tumbled off. The young man would not abandon it to the dan-

gers that lurked. He climbed an elm tree with the pigeon, made a nest, and placed the little bird in safety. In descending, Lanzillo slipped and fell, landing on the pickets of an iron fence. He died the next day at the hospital, leaving a widow and many friends to mourn their loss.

### OLD MAN WILLS \$59,000 TO BOY

When other boys ignored "Old Man" Hallam, of Meriden, Conn., Elmer F. Rader, a son of George F. Rader, factory worker, showed him many little kindnesses. When the will of Robert W. Hallam, one time factory superintendent, was read, it was found Elmer inherits the bulk of his fortune of more than \$75,000.

"Elmer is a good boy and saves money that he earns selling papers," Mr. Hallam had told his attorney, W. C. Mueller, when he made his will a few years ago. Rader was graduated this year from high school, where he stood out as a baseball pitcher.

The income of half his inheritance will see him through college, under the will. Then he will get the principal. Five years later he will get the other half. If he dies without issue, the money will go to church and charitable organizations in Meriden.

Rader inherits the residue after bequests of \$1,000 each to four nieces and \$6,000 each to the Rev. E. G. Reynolds of Glastonbury and Florence Robinson of this city, who were kind to Hallam. Hallam was a widower with no children.

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# Breaking The Record

—OR—

## AROUND THE WORLD IN THIRTY-THREE DAYS

By WILLIAM WADE

(A SERIAL STORY)

### CHAPTER II.

#### The Beginning Of A Strange Journey.

He hurried through the saloons and along the deck, upper and lower, without seeing any thing of the man he sought, and he began to think that after all he had come to the wrong steamer and must look elsewhere.

He was hurrying through the main saloon toward the gangway, the stewards having already warned those who were not sailing to go ashore, when he suddenly came upon Trix Renton, who caught his hand and said, in a tone of the greatest distress:

"Oh, Mr. Dodge, I am so glad to see you. Have you seen my brother? We were all to sail this morning, but papa and mamma have not come, and he has gone to look for them, and now he has not returned, and I do not know what to do, whether to stay here or to go on the pier and wait."

"You are going to Europe, Miss Renton?" asked Dick. "Perhaps Mark Topping and his aunt are on the steamer. They are sailing to-day also. Mrs. Grigson would take care of you if you happened to be carried away, and then there is no doubt but that your parents would follow immediately if they were left behind, which may not happen after all. If you will excuse me I am in something of a hurry, and—"

"Hill, Dick, old man; so you came to see us off, eh? Can't get rid of you, can we? Aunt Tryphena has made an impression on you, I guess. Well, she is not a bad figure of a woman, and her black look might do worse, Dick."

Then Mark Topping rattled on while he shook Dick's hand and slapped him on the back, the fat maiden aunt meanwhile uttering some pleasant words which the boy did not hear, not even when it was repeated.

"That's all right, Mark," he said, trying to get away. "But I have an important case on hand, and here is poor Miss Renton, who is afraid that her people will miss the boat and who is in great distress."

"Don't worry at all, my dear," said the maiden aunt. "I have had plenty of young ladies under my charge, and you will be perfectly safe and well taken care of."

Then, while the good lady was reassuring Trix that she was all right and while Mark was inviting Dick to go to the smoking-room and take a bumper at parting, the young lady felt a de-

cided motion under his feet and knew that they were going down the river.

"I say, Mark, I must go ashore," he cried. "I've got a most important case on hand. Did you know that Foxy Wilmot was murdered last night, just after the dinner?"

"What? Foxy murdered? The old rascal! Who did it, Dick? Have you notified the police? By George! but that is some news. Come and tell me all about it. There's no hurry. You can go back with the pilot and send a wireless to the police. What brought you here, anyhow, when you had a case like that on your hands?"

"Because I knew that he was sailing this morning, and this steamer occurred to me first. He is not on board, and I must get word to the Megantic to hold him."

"We are beating her, my boy. There is a race on, although the officers won't admit it, and she won't stop for anything. Neither will we. We are ahead now, and every minute counts in a race of this sort. Who is he, Dick? Come on and have a smoke. You can go back with the pilot, I tell you."

"Horace Ildone," said Dick. "He was at Mrs. Grigson's last night. I saw him give Foxy a black look every now and then, and I was there when he struck the man down."

"You don't say? Why didn't you nab him then?"

"The lights went out," Dick explained. "But I say, Mark, I must go ashore at once."

"Walk?" laughed the other. "We must be in the lower bay now. The Altruria is a clipper at all times, and just now she is not lowering her record."

"Ildone may be on board the Megantic," said Dick. "In that case a wireless will be all right."

"You are sure he is not here, Dick? Suppose we look."

"They did look—in the first cabin, in the second class and in the stowage, but not a sign of the man could they find."

Then they wired to the other steamer, now more than a mile behind, asking if Ildone was on board, and receiving answer that no such person was on their passenger list.

Dick would have made further inquiries, but there were several persons waiting to send messages to their friends, and these protested against waiting any longer and asked him, rather sarcastically, if he had a monopoly of the time and who was he, anyway!

Dick then bethought him of Trix Renton and went back to the saloon with Mark, finding that the young lady's people had not come and that she was in distress because the efforts of Miss Tryphena to comfort her.

"Dick Dodge has been carried away as well as you, Miss Renton," comforted the good-natured young gentleman. "Many pleasant company, so you too can come ashore."

When Trix learned that she did not have to be so dependent on the good lady, and in a short time she had quite composed herself to her fate.

(To be Continued.)



### BOY FALLS INTO CHIMNEY

Firemen the other day extricated Marston Coffin, nineteen, from the chimney of the Archie Roosevelt home, at Cold Springs Harbor, N. Y.

During the night, while asleep, Marston arose, opened a dormer window and walked out on the roof.

The brick chimney was breast high and he climbed into it. He weighs 150 pounds. His body slid down twenty feet and became wedged in an elbow of the chimney, but he did not awaken until after daylight the following morning, when his cries were heard by members of the family.

### WEAR YELLOW TO AVOID MOSQUITOES

While naturalists have long known that insects have a highly developed sense of smell, recent investigations have indicated that they also have been color prejudiced. For instance, the mosquito prefers many blue to almost other colors, and positively shies at yellow. Flies have no liking for pale blue, but will settle quickly on white objects. Both flies and mosquitoes will respond to light and darkness. Colors of flowers attract many insects, but the most effective is their perfume. So pronounced is this excitement to odors that a scientist has asserted that it could be adapted to rid the cotton-growing States of the boll weevil pest. He has suggested that the male boll weevil could be lured into traps by reproducing from coal tar certain fumes.

### HARDING STAMP ON SALE

The first of the special two-cent stamps struck off as a memorial to President Harding was placed on sale Aug. 21, in Marion, O., Mr. Harding's home town. Michael E. Edwards, Superintendent of the Stamp Division of the Post Office Department, started for Marion recently with 250,000 of the stamps.

Twenty million of the stamps have been printed and they will be placed on sale throughout the country. They will remain the official two-cent stamp several months.

A die proof of the design, mounted on cardboard in a black Morocco case and accompanied by the first stamp to be printed, will be given to Mrs. Harding.

### LAKE FOR BIRDS SAVED

Swan Lake, a valuable and unusual body of water of about 10,000 acres in area, located in Nicolet County, Minn., has been saved to the State through the efforts of the State Game and Fish Commissioners, the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture, and landowners and conservationists of the region. A movement to lower the level of the lake four feet, eventually draining it entirely, was successfully opposed and defeated at two hearings after an examination of the wild fowl and food plant value

of the lake had been made by three representatives of the Biological Survey.

In deciding this case the District Court in Minnesota held evidence on the great importance to the public welfare of such bodies of water as Swan Lake. Its favorable location, its relatively shallow fresh water and its abundant growth of vegetation suitable for cover, nesting sites and food have made it an attractive resort for many kinds of water fowl. Its marshes and wooded islands are a valuable asset in the conservation not only of game birds but also of insectivorous birds useful to farmers. Among the water birds that breed on the lake are several species of ducks, including mallards, blue-winged teal, redheads, lesser scaup and ruddy ducks, sora rails, Florida gallinules, American coots, four species of grebes, black terns and black-crowned night-herons are also common.

At least fifty kinds of plants valuable as food for water birds grow in this lake, including practically all the best duck food plants of the United States. There is also an abundance of fresh-water birds. Lowering the level of this lake materially would eventually cause the disappearance of its present kind of vegetation and gradually destroy its value as a water-fowl resort.

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- 9 Binding-posts.
- Spaghetti, busbar and shielding.

When laying out the panel, its face must show the horn jack at the extreme right lower corner. Halfway up the panel the rheostats and potentiometer are mounted in a row. The dials for the three condensers and coupler are in a row, too, on the left-hand end of the panel, and the loop jack is in the lower left-hand corner. Above the coupler dials stands the switch and switch points. On the baseboard the three lamp sockets, slightly spaced, are behind the rheostats. The resistances and choke lay behind the potentiometer, and the audio transformer can be mounted at the edge of the base-board, between the two 43-plate condensers. The fixed condensers, soldered to the wiring, are mounted where shown.

When everything is in place you will probably find an empty space near the horn jack where the 1,500 turn coil can be laid flat.

Near the 43-plate condenser there will be another space to stand the 300-turn coil, and the 1,250-turn coil must be stood against the rear and left hand side of the cabinet. Of course these big coils will have to be fastened. This can be done with leather straps covered with a piece of silk for insulation, and each coil must be at a different angle than the others.

The set looks more complicated than it really is. All of the parts are standard, and can be bought ready made, even to the 43- and 100 turn coupler coils. In fact, the manufacturer makes them with V-taper bushings, and taps out, ready for mounting on the panel. It is not advisable for amateurs to attempt winding their own coils, as you can never make them as good and efficient as the commercial article, except as follows:

On a 4 inch tube wind 50 turns of No. 22 D. C. C. wire taped every tenth turn, for a primary. The secondary (center) is a slightly smaller tube wound with 100 turns of finer wire to provide a tight coupling and a strong feed back action.

The honeycomb coils do not need mounting, as they are fastened to the baseboard in the position shown. It is absolutely necessary to keep these three coils as widely separated as possible, and also, as was said, to place them at different angles to each other, or the set will not work as they will destroy each other's efficiency.

The rotor of the transformer can be about 3 to 1 to get good feed back action on the set.

The reason 5 watt lamps are suggested is be-

cause of the high B battery voltage; ordinary lamps are not built to stand such heavy plate voltage. You will observe that the B system requires no less than 217 volts, whereas the highest voltage applied to ordinary lamps seldom exceeds 90 volts. The volume of sound with this receiver is, of course, very high, as such sets usually give a proportion of sound according to the quantity of plate voltage. In case the filament control does not give satisfaction, try reversing the filament leads: that is, connect the positive side of the lamp to the reverse side of the rheostat, and the negative side to the A battery lead.

An ordinary aerial can be used with this receiver, but it is designed for a loop, and should be used that way. The rheostats may have to be of a higher or lower resistance than those specified; all depending on the kind of lamps and the amount of battery voltage.

As receivers of this type have a tendency to howl, every precaution should be taken to overcome it. The back of the entire panel can carry a copper foil shielding, grounding one end, to help to get rid of capacity.

The easiest way to construct this set is to first mount the jacks, rheostats, potentiometers, variable condensers, coupler switch and taps on the panel without the baseboard. Then you can put on only the wires that join these instruments with each other.

The lamp sockets, transformer, choke, resistances and honeycomb coils should next be secured to the baseboard and wired together. Then the panel can be fastened to the baseboard, and the instruments on the baseboard can be connected with those on the panel with busbar.

The fixed condensers can go on last.

By working in this manner you may save yourself the difficult task of trying to make some of the connections in very small spaces where it is hard to solder a joint.

The loop has a frame 3 feet square on which about 10 turns of No. 18 wire are wound spaced  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch apart.

In the operation of the receiver remember that the rotor dial of the variocoupler controls the feedback of the regenerative amplifying tube. The left-hand dial varies the condenser across the grid circuit, turning the wave length to the frequency of the incoming signal. Another dial controls the oscillations of the second tube, and the fourth dial changes the frequency of variation. The potentiometer gives vernier control of the grid circuit. To tune, turn the switch lever enough to short circuit all but ten turns of the primary of the variocoupler; then set the two oscillator dials at their maximum. Next turn on the oscillator lamp, and a high-pitched whistle begins as soon as the filament reaches a certain brilliancy. If you do not hear the whistle turn the dial controlling the grid and plate and the one that varies the oscillations, and move the potentiometer. If the whistle is not present hunt for trouble and fix it so the sound is audible in the telephones. Then turn the grid condenser and the rest of the controls until a sound is heard in the phones. When the tubes are freely oscillating, work with the controls to get the greatest amount of amplification. The volume

(Continued on page 26)



## PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 26, 1923

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## Armstrong Super-Regenerator

(Continued from page 25)

adjustment of the dials can only be learned from experience, as each set works slightly different. The operator can learn with a little practice the proper dial settings for particular wave lengths. The most important thing is to learn the proper grid voltage to get the greatest amount of amplification. The proper grid battery for these receivers seems to be from 7 to 12 volts, while on the plate you will need at least 150 to 175 volts. The greatest care must be taken to assemble the set correctly, as the slightest error may cause it not to function. But once you get it in good working order, there is nothing can beat it for clarity and volume. But it is not rated a wonderful distance better. In fact, for sensitivity it may be necessary to use a coil in the grid and/or antenna circuits, or a variable condenser snuggled across both on account of the change of transmitting wave lengths. However, this receiver is good for from 300 to 500 meters, and should be a source of great pleasure to any one who builds it successfully.

## ITEMS OF INTEREST

## BOILING WATER IN A PAPER BAG

No hot water! You turn the tap and it gives forth only a low whizzer. No use yelling for the porter or going down to the hotel desk to complain. You want hot water and you want it quick. There is the gas jet of course, but nothing to use as a container.

Take a paper bag—any sort of paper bag—fill it with water and hold it over the gas flame. The bag will not burn, nor will the water within cook through. The heat of the flame keeps the bag dry, while the water inside prevents scorching. You can bring water to a boil quickly and safely with this method. As long as the cold water tap is in working order and the gas jet can be reached the hot water hotel need have no terrors for the traveller.

## FINDS BOX OF GOLD

Lee Hauser, 28, a laborer, was working with a gang on the Brownsville-Weverton road, near Hagerstown, Md., when his pick struck a loose metal object. Another stroke and a bright piece of gold—a double eagle—appeared.

With this incentive, Hauser dug vigorously and soon unearthed a tin box about the size of a large cigar box. Prying off the top he found the box was full of gold coins, varying in denominations from \$1 to \$20.

Hauser at first intimated that the treasure amounted to more than \$10,000, but later it was understood he admitted the box contained only about \$1,000.

Nothing is known here of reports that the War Department would investigate the case, believing the gold to be part of the money Grover Bergdon is said to have buried in this vicinity several years ago.

## LAUGHS

"Has your daughter a voice that could help the choir?" Mother—Mercy, yes! When she's out of humor, you can hear her talkin' for half a square.

Teacher—Now who can tell me what political economy is? Mike (embryo Tammany statesman)—Gittin' the most votes for the least money.

"There is too much system in this school business!" growled Tommy. "Just because I snickered a little the monitor turned me over to the principal, and the principal turned me over to paw." "Was that all?" No; paw turned me over his knee!"

Teacher—Last Sunday, dear child, we read about Joseph and Pharaoh. What was done to Joseph? Tommy—He was made to sit on the roof. "Why, Tommy, what do you mean by such nonsense?" "Well, you read that Pharaoh set Joseph over his house."

Once a genial comedian consulted an oculist about his eyes. His nose was small and he couldn't keep on the glasses with which the oculist was trying to fit him. "You are not used to glasses, Mr. Blank," said the oculist. "Oh, yes, I am," replied the comedian, "but not so high up."

"Who is that fellow across the street there, and what's he raving about? His arms and jaws are working like those of a Popocratic orator at a free silver convention." "Hush! That's Wadley. His folks are afraid he's losing his mind. Bought a high-grade bike the day before the cut."

"Waiter," said the traveler in an Erie railroad restaurant, "did you say I had twenty minutes to wait or that it was twenty minutes to eight?" "Nayther. Oi said ye had twenty minutes to go, an' that's all ye did have. Yer train's just gone."



## SILVER AS LEGAL TENDER

## TOWING LOCOMOTIVES

to her course. No vessel is permitted to enter the bay and go through on its own power.

The locomotive is propelled by means of a rack rail while towing and while going up or down the grades from one level to another at a speed of two miles an hour. While running idle or on return tracks the speed is changed to five miles an hour and the machine is propelled by the regular traction method, the rack and pinion being entirely released.

A thief with a conscience entered the home of Clark Rubido in Sierra Vista, Cal., the other day, and, after descending with valuable loot, he returned to the front porch and deposited a small black cat, about 12 to 14 years old, which had been part of the loot, on the front porch. The cat, he finally visited first in Los Angeles that day and about a week later, Mrs. Catherine Martin, was a well-dressed young woman carrying a golf bag, walking up to the front door of the Rubido home, talking with the lady a moment and going in. Mrs. Martin thought the stranger was possibly a friend of the Rubidos, and, when the young man came out some time after, still carrying the golf bag, she told him that the Rubidos thought you were the only one in the city. The young man thanked her and hurried on. Half an hour later Mrs. Martin gave the young man some food and showed something on the front porch of the house. When the lady returned they found that the player of golf young man had cut out every one of their silver medals with an

## \$9,000 FOR A MANILA BEGGAR

The sudden change in the financial status of Jagna has come about through the discovery of the address of the veteran, which had been previously lost, the Pension Bureau being unable to send him his pension. He is now living in Manila.

Jagna enlisted in the Thirty-sixth Company Philippine Scouts, United States Army, October 1, 1901, for service in the Philippine insurrection, and while discharging his duty was struck by a rifle ball, which shattered his left thigh bone and made amputation at the hip joint necessary. He was honorably discharged and then a claim in the office of the Surgeon-General of the Army for an artificial limb. Being in financial stress he took advantage of the option given him and elected to accept commutation in money at the rate of \$75 every three years in lieu of an artificial limb.

On December 16, 1909, he filed claim for pension based on loss of leg, which claim was allowed at \$55 a month from December 16, 1909. Certificate issued June 3, 1910, and his name was duly enrolled as a pensioner of the United States. A voucher was mailed to him at Calbayog, Island of Samar, Philippine Islands, his last known post-office address. He was told to execute and return this voucher to the bureau and that upon its receipt a check for amount due would be sent to him.

This letter never reached Jagna and at the end of three years, in accordance with the law, his name was dropped from the pension roll for failure to claim. Years passed and the incident was regarded as closed, but a letter recently addressed to the Surgeon-General, United States Army, by Jagna, asking for increase of commutation for artificial limbs was referred to the Bureau of Pensions and his whereabouts thus ascertained. From this letter it was evident that he had decided the only claim he had on the Government was for the

[illegible]



## PLUCK AND LUCK

### HERE AND THERE

#### MAKING THE SILKWORM DYE ITS OWN SILK

By injecting dyes into their cocoons, a French scientist is reported to have caused silkworms to spin colored threads. Not only the ordinary shades, but the tones and hues that are made from combining various tints, are produced by the little workers receiving treatment by this process. Silk is usually dyed after it has been wound and twisted into floss, but the new method is expected to grow it in colors that will not fade.

#### OLDEST BLOCKHOUSE

Chicago used to feature a block house, but of late years nothing has been said or written of the antique, so, of course one just had to appear on the scene or screen, and it is in Edgecomb, Me. It is said to be the oldest in the United States, and the statement seems probable, as it was built early in 1700. It is still in perfect condition and furnishes good pictures for amateur artists, who visit it in great numbers every season. It is located in one of the most interesting spots for visitors in that section of country.

#### HOLD-UP MEN, BEWARE

A burglar or hold-up alarm has recently been perfected by William A. Hassenbach of New York, which offers a large menace to the thieves who would dare its efficacy. The mechanical means used Mr. Hassenbach prefers to keep secret; but the alarm, which he has recently demonstrated before a number of jewellers, has passed every test.

It is designed with a double purpose; to give an efficient alarm when a hold-up is attempted, and to protect the salesmen who may be menaced by pistols and so unable to reach for an alarm-button, even with their feet, without putting their lives in peril. Its operation is as follows:

When a gunman orders a clerk to put up his hands the very action of the clerk sets a mechanism in action which causes a police whistle, connected on the outside of the store, to blow. And once it has started blowing nothing can stop it till the mechanism runs down.

#### HUMAN HAIR MAKES STRONG CLOTH

Tens of human hair are being turned into cloth by a Southern factory to supply the demand of cotton-weaved mills of that section for a fabric that will withstand for a time at least, a pressure of 1,000 to 4,500 pounds a square inch. Only that made from hair is strong enough. Formerly it was woven from cow's hair, but the price of that product went to such high levels as to prohibit its use. After a series of tests, a method was devised for weaving human hair in specially constructed machinery. The search for a sufficient supply to keep the factory going ended in China, where buyers found a veritable army of coolies ready to sacrifice their long queues for American money. Baled in huge bales, the hair arrives at the factory ready for weaving, having already been inspected and sterilized on the way

over from the Orient. Combed and carded, it is twisted into threads and fed into the looms, where it is woven into rolls of cloth  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick, the bolt weighing 400 pounds.

#### A UNIQUE POST OFFICE

Opposite Tierra del Fuego is a very high, rocky cliff overhanging the Strait of Magellan, and from one of the rocks is suspended, by a long chain, a barrel which receives mail. To be sure, there is no postmaster, nor is there any regular letter carrier or collector; but every ship that goes through the strait stops and sends a boat to this curious little post-office, looks over the letters that are in it to see if there are any for the men on board that particular ship, and places therein letters for seamen on board ships that are known to be headed for the strait.

Who was the person that first thought of such a scheme we are not told, but the sailors think a great deal of their unique post-office, and there has never yet, to anybody's knowledge, been any violation of the confidence reposed in it. When a sailor sends a letter to it addressed to another seaman he is absolutely certain of its delivery. It may be that one of the two seamen is on a vessel which is not expected to pass by this ocean post-office, but the letter may have on it a request that a vessel going east or west shall pick it up and deliver it to some point where the seaman will be sure to receive it. In this manner letters have been known to make their way to the Arctic Ocean, or even to India.

#### CATS SAVE TICKER TAPE

"Food for cats, \$51.73," is an item which appears in the annual report of the New York Cotton Exchange, just published. Members of the Exchange recently said that the reason for it is rats. One official said that in spite of all the precautions taken, rats and mice occasionally appear on the trading floor. Traps have been employed in vain and as a result the cat is the mainstay in combating the nuisance.

The rats appear to have a fondness for ticker tape and infrequently new rolls are found nibbled through and other damage is done from time to time. As one member put it, the bulls and bears in Wall Street may be more or less mythical, but the rats and mice are real, hence the contribution of the Exchange in the feeding of cats. Other exchanges in the financial districts also have their feline aids.

The Cotton Exchange recently received a letter from the firm of cat food feeding it, with the year and the full amount of food consumed, and the reason the trading floor at the New York Cotton Exchange is the seat of the feline cats, who spend the night on the trading floor, there is an extraordinary and unusual to the exchange room, where she sleeps until the market closes. Then she again leaves the chamber and is warded up to the trading floor to resume her vigil. Only a few rats have been caught since occupation of the new building.





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## OWL BETTER MOUSER THE THAN CAT

There are many mistaken ideas about hawks and owls. Rodents are the natural diet of hawks and only the sharp shinned, Cooper's, pigeon and goshawk maliciously attack poultry, says the *Farm Journal*. Owls are great destroyers of mice, rats and other rodents. In the stomach of a two-week-old horned owl the remains of five mice were found. In the retreat of a pair of barn owls 3,000 skulls of gophers and mice were found. Hawks work during the day and the owls at night. Only the great horned owl is a regular poultry eater, and he is not common.

Owls swallow their food entire and later disgorge the indigestible parts, which consist of fur pellets and bones of rodents. An owl kept in a barn is a better mouser than a cat. Try it and watch results. Dr. C. Hart Merriam of the United States Department of Agriculture has estimated that in offering a bounty on hawks and owls, which resulted in the killing of more than 100,000 of these birds, the State of Pennsylvania suffered a loss of almost \$4,000,000 in one year and a half.

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